



# AN ODD SITUATION

BY  
STANLEY WATERBLOC

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BY

STANLEY WATERLOO

*Author of "A Man and a Woman," etc.*

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# AN ODD SITUATION

## CHAPTER I.

### SOME CHILDREN AND A RAM.

No ram of your modern breed was he,  
With silky wool and long pedigree;  
No pet of the yearly fair was here,  
Southdown plump or big Liecestershire,  
With back as broad as a Persian mat,  
Short-legged, lazy, and round and fat.  
But a monster gaunt, stepping free and high,  
With a wicked look in his gleaming eye,  
And front as gnarled as a cypress limb—  
Not one in the village but dreaded him!

—*Legend of St. Louis.*

My name is Jason Moore, and I am a hired man working on the farm of David Long, which farm laps the line, being partly in the state of New York and partly in the Dominion of Canada. I have been familiar with the history of the neighborhood and its people for more than a quarter of a century, and am particularly well acquainted with what has happened on and about the place where I



have lived so long. I have no story of the war, nor even of such adventure as might come when the woods hereabouts were still inhabited by dangerous wild beasts, but it does seem to me that the occurrences on the Long farm for the past few years are worth the telling. Had I more of the gift for a story—had I such a faculty in that way as has Eber Jones, who keeps the grocery store at Magone, our county seat—I know I could make it interesting, but that is a gift which comes to but few people. It's likely it may be inherited. Eber's father had it. He could tell a story in any way to make one cry or, as they say, to make a horse laugh. I have always envied those with such a knack. I had a good common school education, such as, thank God! any American who wishes it may have, and I am not much afraid of my grammar, though I may use some common expressions—but I can't get always just the word I want.

It may be worth while to say a little more about myself so that what I had to do with all that happened may be better understood. I am a round-shouldered, pretty solid sort of a man, now about sixty years of age and I have been a widower for more than thirty of those years. I got along very well during those seven or eight years while I was

married, but when my wife died I concluded to remain single. I am naturally of a peaceful disposition. When there is no work to be done, I am very fond of reading and go over the newspaper thoroughly, and I take an interest in politics, as I believe any good citizen should do. The government is only a big concern in which he is a stockholder, and he ought to look after his interests as well as he can in his little way. I am by no means a solitary man. I own a few acres ten miles south of here, enough to make me safe in the matter of a home, even had I no other savings, but I rented the little place and came here to work years ago, partly because I was lonesome and partly because Hosea Long, father of David, was an old boy-hood friend of mine and I liked to be with him. He is dead now—I am living with his son. The young man, I call him so still, though he is over thirty—seems, in fact, almost like a son of my own, I have been near him so constantly from his boyhood. For that matter, I have known that dear Canadian, Alice Mackenzie, nearly as long and she has quite as much to do with this story as has David. How things have changed! I remember those two as children and even now there comes to me distinctly the memory

of what happened one afternoon when David was but eleven and Alice nine and when, children as they were, they could have no idea that their lives would ever become tangled together. To me it was very funny, as I saw it from the distance of a couple of fields away, though I felt like trouncing the boy afterward. Of course I don't know just what he was thinking of, the mannerless youngster, but I can guess pretty nearly, for I knew most of his freaks and fancies, as he had them then.

It was one afternoon in August when a boy—this same country scape-grace—sat on the top rail of a fence and gazed down across the fields where ran the creek, shaded by the wild plum and thorn-apple trees which grew along its bank and which had been spared by the axe of the earliest settler. The youth had reached just that age when a boy ought, ordinarily, to be killed; the age when he is clumsy and uncouth of appearance, and when, if there be any sense of fun in him, it is shown often in a brutal kind of way. I've read somewhere what someone has said, that, if they could be brought to life again, aged say seventeen, all boys should be slain at the age of nine, or thereabouts, and this boy sitting on the fence was no exception. He was healthy and too enterprising.

The scene upon which the boy looked was very fair. I'm not poetical myself, but I can see things. The slope of the field before him toward the creek was clover-covered for late mowing and there was the pleasant smell of the blossoms in the air. Upon the rising slope on the other side, a field of ripening grain was made a brighter yellow in the sunshine. Running nearly in the same direction as the creek and its line of trees and bushes was a rail fence which crossed the stream at one point, so that it ran partly in each field, a convenient thing for the watering of cattle.

The boy sitting with his bare feet on the third rail of the fence and his face resting between his hands, his elbows on his knees, seemed rather in a lazy mood. His chip hat was pushed backward on his head. The light wind played upon his forehead and his eyes were blinking sleepily. After a while, though, his manner changed. Something at a distance caught his eye.

What he saw was a group of children who came into the field at the side farthest from him. There were four of them, the largest a girl of nearly his own age, who carried a basket. There were two other girls, somewhat smaller, and a boy, the last a child yet in dresses but very sturdy and red

of leg. Any one acquainted with the country and the seasons of its wild fruits could tell that they were going plum gathering. David knew all the children well. The oldest girl was Alice Mackenzie, the only child of Alexander Mackenzie, the Canadian who owned the farm across the line, and the others were the children of Jonas Latimer, the farmer to the west on the Canadian side. The boy had half a mind to go over and help in the wild plum getting. He could climb the trees and shake down the fruit, and that would make the gathering easier. But a noise behind him made him change his mind.

The noise was only a hoarse bleat, but as David turned on the fence he became wide awake in a moment. No more laziness! He saw an enemy; one just now harmless, indeed, but an enemy just the same. The bleat was from the throat of a beast, and that beast a ram. He was coming across the field toward the boy and the youth himself seemed to be what he was drawn by. It was an earnest-looking ram, one, you could see, who, had business on hand and was ready to attend to it. He came trotting up close to the fence and then up and down beside it, bleating harshly. He wanted to get at the boy sitting up there just beyond his reach.



The boy, perched aloft in safety, was pleased mightily. Very intimately, to his sorrow at times, did he know this four-legged thing. No terrible-looking monster was this ram, for he was hornless, but a more vengeful and resolute cross of scrub and Cotswold never stalked in a meadow. Time and again had the boy, when after the cows, been treed by the brute, and even the grown men about the place were cautious when crossing the field where he might be feeding. From the tip of his stumpy tail to the end of his Roman nose the beast was full of fight and ready to face anything. Even the cattle and horses feared him.

The boy was tickled. He was safe and had the ram at a disadvantage. He jumped off the fence on his own side, filled his pockets with pebbles, and pelted his bleating foe with great comfort and vigor. The ram backed off and came at the fence viciously and with a crash, but that did not change the state of things. The boy was out of reach and the ram tired finally of the fun. Then, into the head of that sun-browned youth came an idea, for the harboring of which he should have been thrashed within an inch of his life!

He looked down toward the plum trees where Alice and the younger children were gathering the

fruit, all unmindful of him and his affair on the other side of the field, and noted carelessly that they were doing well. The plums, he knew, were lying thick upon the ground and he could see that the basket Alice carried was nearly filled, for, as they walked long beside the copse, the largest of the other children would occasionally give her help. The little party had just turned into where a road-way for the wagons in haying and harvest time had been cut through the bushes, and there they had stopped and were busy now in adding to their store.

The boy looked at the plum gatherers, then at the chafing ram and there came upon his face a grin: "If Billy could get at 'em! Great Scott!"

And the thought grew upon him and the devil which gets into boys prevailed, and he moved off along the fence to where the bars were, the ram following in chase upon the other side. One bar, high up, the boy pulled out from the end, the ram watching him. Another bar, and through the gap the ram leaped savagely. He turned for the boy but that personage was on the fence and walking away along the top rail. The ram followed until they were rods away from the bars. Then the boy hopped down and ran to a big stump in the field

the sheep had left, where he hid himself away from his pursuer's sight. The brute ran up and down for a time, but seeing his enemy no longer, turned away to feed. Soon, being in the field where the plum trees were, he saw the children and began moving toward them slowly. The boy, peering from behind the stump and grasping the situation, came cautiously to the bars and followed the ram, at a safe distance in the rear. The children among the plum trees worked away, unconscious of any danger.

From a walk the ram changed his pace to a trot and, at a couple of hundred yards from the children, let them know what was coming by harsh bleats that meant mischief. They saw their peril and then there was a scene of fright, and loud cries from all the younger as they gathered about the oldest, clinging helplessly to her dress. As well as the boy did they know the old ram and his savage ways. As for Alice, she was at first, almost unnerved with fright. She turned to flee into the bushes but checked herself, for there were the helpless little ones! And now the ram, changing his pace again, was coming forward with a rush. The girl stood stock still, instinctively holding out before her—with some fancy it might give her a

slight protection—the big basket full of plums.

Have you ever seen a ram make his charge? If you have grown up on a farm you know all about it. The brute feels only that he has a strong neck and a hard head and that he must hurl his body, without any reason, at what he wants to hurt. And so the beast gathered his legs beneath him now and, with two or three great leaps, he was close upon the children and then, with arched back and lowered head, he launched himself! He struck the basket fairly and went through the scared group like a huge, wool-covered rock thrown from a catapult, hurling aside and overthrowing Alice and the little ones. The air was full of plums!

The boy out in the field threw himself on the grass in a spasm of wild delight. He rolled over and over, yelling in the frenzy of his fun. It was too good! He laughed until his eyes were full of tears, then raised himself to a sitting posture, to note the end of the affair. From a dense place in a thicket on one side stuck up a pair of short, fat, red legs, wobbling violently, and the howl of a lusty youngster in distress showed where the baby was. The small girls, unhurt, had crept away in the bushes and were running, screaming, toward the nearest fence, and the ram, paying no atten-

tion to them, was occupied with Alice. The girl, not hurt much by her overthrow, had fallen close beside the bushes and had shown the good sense then to get as close to them as she could, and there lie still. The beast trotted up and down beside her, trying to butt her, though in vain. A ram is practically harmless to anything lying close to the earth. The boy in the field, as his eye took in the whole scene, roared again. He noted all the terror, the fleeing children and the baby's waving legs, and then, as he looked at Alice and saw what she was doing, there came to him a dim feeling that she was very sensible and plucky—for a girl. He became a little ashamed of his own part in the matter. It is a rare thing, but a boy of eleven has really been known to be ashamed of something he has done, and this was one of the occasions. The ram was stubborn in staying by the girl and the boy, thought of how often he had been kept treed by the same brute. He began to get mad at the animal! He was half inclined to fight it, to try to finally subdue it, but he had fears. Such a thing had been in his mind for some time, but he had never quite braced up to it. Bad luck had come to a man or two who had held too light an opinion of that same ram. But the boy got more angered.



He did not care so much for the strait Alice was in—that was a good joke—but the ram was too mean and he was tired of being chased, almost daily. And then, with his courage all at once up to the reckless point, he found a club, a stout one, and ran toward the bushes, yelling.

The ram paid no attention to the boy until he was close at hand, but then he did not hesitate a moment. Seeing an enemy upright was enough! He came trotting out, lowered his head and charged. The boy stood his ground well. He struck with all his might as the ram flung himself at him, but he might as well have smitten the air. The club was not even such a protection as had been the girl's heavy basket of plums. It had no more effect on that bony front than a pat of the hand, and the boy, struck fairly on the chest, was knocked over and over and lay on the ground half stunned and so bruised that it was a month before the soreness left. The ram, carried forward by the rush, went fairly above his enemy and for yards beyond, and then turned for another charge. The boy, dazed by what had happened, lay still and the sheep began to trot around him, bleating impatiently. But this could not last. The boy, who was lying flat on his back, made clear though

now, as he got his senses, raised himself a little in an effort to turn over and crawl toward his club. Then the ram rushed at him again. Almost without thought David dropped his head and put up his hands clutchingly and caught the animal about the neck. And a minute later he knew he was master of the situation!

The ram plunged and scrambled backward but the boy's hands were buried in the wool and his grip was strong. He locked both arms together and, thrashed and tossed about though he might be, he knew the ram could not hurt him. The beast leaped and floundered and bleated. It rushed wildy here and there but could not shake off its desperate burden. Then the boy got one leg over its back and raised himself fairly astride and curled both legs underneath and with arms still locked about the animal's neck lay closely and yelled triumphantly. He could no more be shaken off than could a lynx from a deer it had dropped upon. The ram galloped heavily about the field, bleating now not in defiance but in fear, and getting weaker every moment of its frantic and frightened run. The boy, proud as Lucifer from the discovery of a way for getting even, was becoming more daring. He reached down one hand

and caught hold of a foreleg below the knee and the brute stumbled and fell. The next minute the boy was astride its neck and a moment later its fore feet were tied together with a stout cord, something the youth had about him, of course, as might have been expected from one of his age and circumstances. Then, with a kick or two at the foe, he strode off toward the plum trees.

The girl, freed from danger, was up and had pulled the baby from the bushes, and that youngster, still sobbing, was all himself again, his pudgy legs maybe a little redder than they were before, but otherwise all right. Alice had watched the fight in the field with curiosity but, seeing the boy at last victorious, had begun gathering up the plums. As David came near she straightened and looked at him but said nothing.

"I licked him, didn't I?" said the boy with an air.

The girl made no direct answer. "Did you let down the bars?" she asked.

His face became red. "Y-e-es," he said, "but it was only in fun."

She looked at him with dignity. "I think you are a very mean boy."

He did not say anything but, rather shame-

faced, began helping her gather the plum the younger girls, who had come back now, taking a hand in the work. No other word was spoken between David and Alice. The little party went away with the fruit and David went back to his prisoner. He punched the ram, he put dirt in its mouth, he maltreated it in every way he could think of and, when, as he finally concluded was safe, the cord was taken from its legs, the beast dashed away in a panic. Its pride was broken, and toward human kind, and David in particular, it was thenceforth most discreet.

And of this one little happening of a summer afternoon I have told only because it so often comes back to me, and because this same boy and the girl figure so much in what I have to tell. They had no very high opinion of each other then.

Most of what I have told I saw from a distance. Then I came across the fields in time to capture David, just as the ram was loosened. I caught the young man by the shoulder and shook him with some earnestness. "What have you been doing?" I asked.

"Did you see me rastle with the ram?" he said, dodging the question.

"Never mind! That was an unmanly trick let-

ting the thing in on the children." The young wretch's face sobered for a moment and then that spirit of the boy and of fun spoke out again: "O, Jason," he said, "you ought to have seen it! It just rained plums!"



## CHAPTER II

### SHIFTS AND CHANGES.

Lord Lovel must needs go sailing away:

(There were other maids to see)

He was gone from his home for a year and a day—

And then he came back to me.

—*The Old Story.*

Fifteen years do not bring so many changes in the country as in the city, but boys and girls make an exception. Much had happened since the afternoon when that bad youth, David, had let the ram into the field where were Alice and the younger children. There were gaps in the households to which the two belonged, and they themselves were different personages from the youngsters of whom I have been telling. Each had grown, just as had the young trees in the orchards and they were new people—a man of parts and a fine young woman.

For most children of tolerably well-to-do farming folk in the lower lake region there is, unless there be great ambitions, a simple way of

getting acquainted with the world and "being somebody." The boy, it is thought, should learn how to act in good society—and so should the girl, to a certainty. The plan is easy: Along in the teens, somewhere the boy or girl, as the case may be, must in winter go to school in the nearest town. So, when he was about eighteen, David, who had finished with the district teacher, had gone to Magone, the county seat, to attend school there while snow flew, and it chanced that, a year later, Alice did the same thing. Naturally, one would think, the girl should have been sent to a Canadian town school instead; but the town on the American side was nearer, and along the border the more intelligent have no prejudices. They had been together in the same town so for two winters at the time of which I am telling, and it might be supposed that, coming from the same place out in the country, they would be close friends; but it really was not so. The girl, as girls always do, had developed faster than the boy, and was the quicker to learn all the city ways—for, of course, the Magone way was counted the "city" way. When David was twenty and she eighteen, he was still awkward and a little shy, while Alice was quite at ease in Magone society. He

met her sometimes at the village parties which he ventured to attend, and, as matters stood between the two, there wasn't much resemblance between now and the time when he had so much fun from her plum gathering. She filled his eye more than any of the other girls, but he was quite as afraid of her as of any of those who had lived in the town all their lives. She was not like them—she was still a country girl all through—but she was as much at home as they. He told me once, long afterward when he had become old enough and experienced enough to speak out, that she made him think of an Alderney his father had once bought and turned in with the other cattle. That was an odd comparison to make, but David never became anything but a lover of the country and one who used its expressions in trying to tell what he thought of anything and, for that matter, Alice was very much like him, though at this time they did not know each other's tastes. He said that once he found some verses in a newspaper that made him think of her, and he had cut them out. He showed them to me—the piece of paper on which they were printed, a good deal frayed at the edges and worn at the creases from having been carried in his pocket-book so long. They were these:

She was brought to the city as flowers are brought—  
You will find not a fairer one all the world over—  
But none of the city's hard features she's caught,  
You can tell by her face she was born 'mid the clover.

Her voice is as pure as the bluebird's low note,  
In the morns when the rigor of April's abating,  
And her laugh has the trill which you hear from the throat  
Of the bobolink, joying in May and the mating.

Her teeth are as white as the liquor which flows  
When milkweed is wounded; her lips have the redness  
Of the prickly-ash berry of scarlet, which glows  
Full of life though about it be autumn' gray deadness.

And her breath is as sweet as the liverwort's scent  
That is borne with delight by the wooing March zephyr,  
And her eyes have the softness and pleadingness blent  
In the big, melting eyes of the innocent heifer.

Her warm, fluffy hair has a touch of the gold  
In the silk of the corn when it's near to the reaping;  
Its meshes the gleam of the summer enfold—  
For it would not depart—in their permanent keeping.

Her thin little ears have the hue of the pink,  
The wild pink that grows by the creek's shallow waters,  
And her cheeks all the blush of the rose by the brink  
Of the same little stream—Nature humors her daughters.

She is fair in the city world, O, she is fair!  
But she's strayed from her home, has the beautiful rover,  
And she's brought a reflection of all that is there;  
You can tell by her face she was born 'mid the clover.!

When David showed the verses to me he was no longer in much awe of Alice and spoke of them only in a casual way, after I had said something about her pleasant manner on some occasion which I now forgot, but I believe that, at the time he cut them from the newspaper, he was half in love with her, already. If so, though, he did not tell of it, and, after that, they were separated for a season and when they met again he had grown to be less timid.

There's a pretty big belt of country lying east and west along the lower lakes from which even the young man with tastes only for the farm usually tries his wings a little before he settles down. The country is yet comparatively young but has become old enough for that. Michigan, the Province of Ontario and north-western New York are distinctly in this belt. Ontario, lying largely between Michigan and New York is, except for its relations, a state like one of them. It has the same climate and something like the same people. They are good people, too, in that big tongue of land; no better, perhaps than those in other parts of the Dominion, but we understand them better. They cross the line much and there is a mingling of families. But I was only speaking of the belt in general and going to say that David must needs do

as others had done and go away from us for a time. His winter schooling in the town was ended and he left us. We missed his strong arms about the farm—he had grown into a big, earnest fellow who worked with a will—and now Hosea and I must get other help or do all the work alone, and we were hardly equal to it. David had engaged on a propeller and was getting acquainted with the great lakes and the cities along them and seeing more of life. He had good sense, though, and worked hard and tried to keep a little ahead and get practical views of things without ever becoming wild or too fond of the towns, as too many young men from the country do. I'm inclined to the belief that it pays a young fellow, even one who is going to be a farmer, to knock around for three or four years, if he will but keep a level head. With David it was all right.

In time there came upon him a healthful homesickness and we got him back to the farm and the growing things, the place which suited him best. It was comfortable to have him with us again, it was too good to look at him as he went swinging across a field, and, a little later, it proved to have been well that he came back when he did, for his father died within six months of his return and he

was very glad that he had not delayed his homecoming.

There were but three of us who really belonged—for I counted with the family—now left in the old farm-house. Mrs. Long was ill for a time after her husband's death, and among those who helped her then was Alice Mackenzie.

I wish I could tell of Alice as she was, or in fact as she is now, for she has changed very little. The winters spent in town had not done more than to make her a trifle more sedate, but she was yet a country girl in every way, though developed into a fine woman. There is a woman in one of the stories of that English writer—Mr. Charles Reade—I like stories sometimes—of whom Alice often made me think, a woman of good height deep-chested and broad-hipped and with a splendid motion when she walked or ran. Alice could run well, and very few women can do that. I think the Canadian girls, if not always as bright as ours, are, as a rule, clearer-faced and are better on their feet, but this may be only a fancy. I know that Alice was a fine girl and that she and David as I have seen them standing together made a couple worth the looking at.

She was a good girl, Alice, one without any



moods and with a pleasant temper and one who had taken faithful and loving care of her mother during her long illness, for Mrs. Mackenzie, like Mr. Long, was now dead and Alice was her father's only real dependence. I don't know what the old man would have done without her, for the time had come when he was no longer the one who could set the pace in the field for his hired help and when, even in chores at home, he was much hampered. His daughter was, in his household, as much of a stay as David was in ours.

There were one hundred and sixty acres—just a quarter section,—in our farm and it was well cleared, only thirty acres being woodland. A good deal of it was in grass for we kept a fair showing of cattle and horses and a few sheep. We raised hogs, too, and that meant corn. In this respect we were different from Mackenzie, over the line, for he kept few hogs and no sheep at all. He put in a good deal of wheat and such grains, though, and managed to make it pay, and he had a fancy for poultry. There were many chickens and turkeys and geese on his place. From our dining-room windows we could see Alice feeding them every morning. The old man's farm was of just the same size as ours and he was counted one of

the solid men of the neighborhood. He did very little work himself nowadays, for a broken ankle had left him with the muscles strained so that they never got right again about the joint, and he went around on crutches part of the time. On what he called his well days he carried only a cane.

He grumbled a little over his condition, particularly because, he said, he could discover no man he could trust completely with the management of the farm; no hired man who suited him could be found, and the problem was finally solved in another way.

I always rather liked old Mackenzie. He was gruff in his ways but good-hearted enough and honest and fair. He was canny, too; I suppose because of the Scotch blood in him, and could drive a bargain. He wore a gray beard cropped close to his face and had keen gray eyes and always wore a rough gray suit. He made me think sometimes of a crippled old gray dog. Alice was just the apple of his eye. No matter how rough with others he might be, he was always gentle to her and she could do about as she pleased with him.

The oldest person in our house was of quite a different sort from the one I have described. Mrs. Long, David's mother, if she had been a man,

would have been just the opposite of old Mr. Mackenzie. She was very spare and, despite her sixty odd years, was seemingly as active as ever. She was a notable housekeeper of the down-east style—she came from Massachusetts—and was somewhat given to fretting. She was a wonderful cook and her bread and biscuit and cake and preserves and pumpkin and custard and elderberry pies, and roast spare-ribs or chicken pie, or whole New England dinners, were something beyond comparison. We lived well; there was no doubt of that. The hired girl, Lucinda Briggs, had picked up so much of Mrs. Long's skill that she could cook well, too, but she was a crazy thing whose antics often made us laugh. She was a big girl with light hair and a generally mussed-up look and a voice even out of proportion to her size. She was good-natured, though, and not afraid of work and strong as a horse and faithful, just the sort of girl to feed pigs or bring up your calves after weaning, or to be handy at maple-sugar time or about the leach at soap-making.

And so we buckled down to a new life under David's management of the place, with the same old problem before the farmer, of gaining a little something more than food and shelter as a reward

for each year of hard and constant work, and the certainty that the surplus, if any, must be small. On the the other hand, the food was certain to be abundant and of the best, and the shelter to be roomy and comfortable, and there must be the crisp, good air of winter and the bright things of nature in summer and, above all, the independence which the farmer has almost alone. In the county, as old Hosea used to say: "One man is as good as another, and generally a little better." And in the times when nations are in peril it is always the country which comes to the rescue.

We settled down to the life fairly and David was full of ambition to have the best farm in the county and was taking an agricultural paper or two and planning valorously. He had even concluded—and that was a great departure—to under-drain the fields nearest the creek, for one or two of them lay pretty flat up to the crest of the hollow and, after rain sometimes, water would stand in the clogged dead-furrows and there would be patches where the crop would be sickly and thin, and all this the under-draining would help. And we built a tool-shed with a lean-to where a team could pass through, and, after that, a plough wasn't left standing in the furrow during rainy weather nor a

harrow left beside the road. David argued that neatness and close care of everything meant saving and I agreed with him. Old Hosea, though a good judge of crops and planting and stock and a hard worker, had been more careless. The earliest settlers', I've noticed, are generally that way. They do not value land much, it having been cheap and plenty when they began tilling, and they do not farm closely, because up to these later years, it wouldn't have paid them. But we—for I was almost as interested as David in his plans—were great farmers. We are "going to make things hum," as he put it. Then, for a season, things didn't go as well. David began to lose his earnestness as to this field or that field or this hog or that heifer, and be often absent-minded. I didn't know what it meant, at first, the symptoms being something out of the common. For a time, although we'd been having dry weather, I thought maybe it was malaria. But it was something else. The young man was in love.

## CHAPTER III.

### LOVE AND THE LINE.

The Honeymoon hangs over Borderland,  
As she peers down through the trees,  
And her smile is beamingly, broadly bland  
Over something that she sees.  
And a gossiping star improves the chance,  
While beside her, to disclose,  
With much detail as to circumstance,  
What he saw before she rose.  
But never a word for a thousand years  
Will the Honeymoon repeat  
Of what she may think, or has seen, or hears—  
For the Honeymoon's discreet.

*Tales of the Skies*

I know very little about love-making though I have been a married man. My own marriage, years ago, was arranged in an orderly way and without much sentiment.

As to David's affair, I knew almost nothing because, not suspecting what was the matter with him, I hadn't particularly noticed what he was about. I knew that, for a month or two, he had

found need of a great many errands to the Mackenzie place and that I had seen him hurry across a field when Alice's straw hat showed above the fence as she might chance to be coming down the road. I suppose the wooing must have been pretty, as wooings go, for they were both bright people and—barring the temporary weakness of mind which comes at courting-time—no doubt their talk was up to the proper wooing grade. What the talk was, just how David made love, I never knew, that being naturally a delicate subject, but I do know that he succeeded and that, from being absent minded and rather careless about work, he suddenly became all alive and joyous and did work enough for two men every day, in sheer exuberance of spirit. I finally asked him bluntly what had ailed him? "Nothing," he said, "only I'm going to marry Alice." The announcement rather took me back; it was unexpected. I rallied enough to tell him that I was glad of it and that I didn't believe he could have found a better girl in all Canada or the United States either. He agreed with me very certainly on that point. "She is the sweetest woman in the world," said he.

"I suppose other fellows have said that of other girls and been just as earnest about it, as you are. But when did you two agree to this?"



"Three days ago, Jason. She knew before—she knew how I felt about it, but I'd never fairly asked her until then. It was in the barn, their barn, Jason"—and his face lighted up as he told it—"both the big doors were open, for they'd just finished putting in a load, and she had come out to find her father. There I saw her as she was standing in the middle of the floor looking about. It came upon me then that I would wait no longer. I went in from the road to her and we said a few words, about commonplace things and then I told her how well she looked in the soft, calico dress she wore and she laughed and leaned back against a ladder which was standing by the mow. And I told her all there was of it and she sobered in a moment and said simply that she had known I cared—she couldn't help that—and that she loved me very dearly. And there, Jason, you have the story, at least the end of it, and we shall be married almost at once. There is no use in waiting."

"And what does old Mackenzie say?"

"I haven't been to him yet. But he does about what Alice wants always, and he likes me, I guess. If he doesn't agree"—and David's face set a little—"I'll have her anyhow. But there'll be no trouble. He is a pretty good old man."

And the young people were not mistaken as to how old Mackenzie would feel in the matter. They say that the course of true love never does run smooth, but I know better, for this was true love and ran as smooth as the creek on a level. Old Mr. Mackenzie was a little surprised at the suddenness of the thing but that was all. The old man showed himself to have sharper eyes than I could boast for he had noticed the progress of affairs between the two for some time and it had set him thinking. There was no young man in the region he would rather have for a son-in-law than David, and a son-in-law, or at least some one besides himself about the place, he really needed. His ankle would not allow him to move about as he wished and here was a settlement of the problem. It was a good thing in a business way as well as a good thing for the young people. So the old man told David that for a young fellow of his age, he thought him tolerably sensible and that, though he was not good enough for Alice, he might have her. David's mother was even more satisfied with the proposed marriage than old Mackenzie. She was very fond of Alice.

So the date for the wedding was agreed upon, and the lovers were together a good deal, as lovers

will be, and we poked a little fun at David, which he took good-naturedly. And the days passed without further incident until one evening old man Mackenzie came stumping over to our house, where Alice chanced to be already. She was consulting over something with Mrs. Long, and David and I were sitting on the stoop smoking. Mackenzie took a chair, and a little later the two women joined us. Then the old man broke out:

"What am I going to do, living in the house over there alone?"

Nobody seemed to know what to say, though David mumbled out something about a housekeeper, and Alice said very earnestly that he should not be neglected.

"A housekeeper!" snorted the old man. "I'll have none of them! And I am not going to live alone—mind that! David, I've come over to make you a proposition. You've a good enough farm; but one big place can be run better than two little ones. I'll not give up what I own entirely, while I'm above ground, but I'll sell you the farm. I'll take a mortgage on it, and I'll make a will so that the mortgage will go to Alice, and, for the interest, I'll live with my daughter. And maybe I won't be altogether useless, bad as the ankle is,

and Jason and myself will smoke our pipes together, and you'll start off in the beginning with a big family, as well as a big farm, on your hands. You'll be a responsible pair of young people. What d'ye say to it?"

There couldn't well be but one answer to such an offer as that, and David closed with it gladly. It would be more pleasant for Alice; it would give us a great farm—and farmers like other people, have their pride of property. And so it all came to pass. The deed was made and the mortgage given, and David came into possession of a farm of three hundred and twenty acres; and the young people took to planning.

I understand from those who have tried it that there is much comfort in the pretty scheming of lovers before marriage. I never experimented much myself, but I guess there isn't much doubt about the thing. The pair are in the sunshine and their eyes are blinded. They can divine ways of securing all good fortune, and, as for contingencies—there are no such things. This couple, being hopeful and strong, and so far not unfortunate in their lives, may have planned a little more than do most young people.

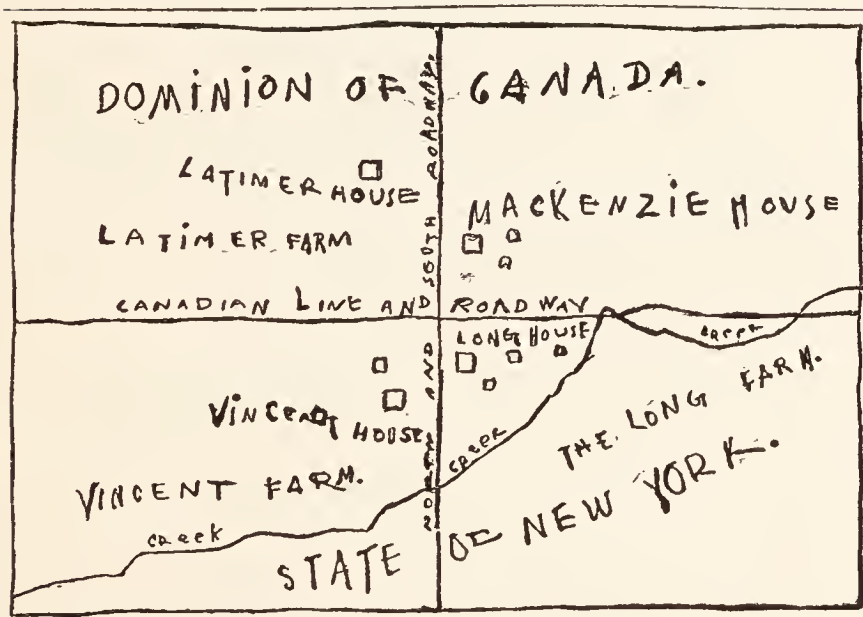
They agreed that, while they would not, of

course, be disturbed in the possession of the Canadian farm, they should not, with such an estate as David now controlled, be merely satisfied to live in comfort, but that they should try to pay off the mortgage. Each thought of the time to come, and, though neither mentioned it, no doubt both David and Alice, had in mind, in a vague sort of way, the day when there would be others to care for, and when girls and boys would cost money, as so many good things do. "It is a big place," said David, "and it is a good one. With the farms united I believe I can manage so that we shall make money. We'll take a great pride, dear, in lifting that mortgage, and your father will, I know, take a pride, too, in what we are trying to do. He can leave the money as he wishes. It will come to you anyhow, I suppose, but that doesn't make any difference. We'll feel more respect for ourselves by acting just as if your father was the hardest sort of money-lender."

And Alice agreed with David, and they had long talks as to further improvements and the uniting of the households and the changes to be made generally. The farm was all one. They did not care where the line came. What to them at this time was Canada, or any other country?

Speaking of the line, it is a queer thing. The two countries have no middle ground between them, such as I have read there once was between England and Scotland, a strip they called "the Marches" and where there was continual fighting and turmoil. The line here is an invisible thing. The two countries touch. A daisy may grow in Canada and lean over and bloom in the United States, and of the four little eggs in a blue bird's nest two may lie in either land. What a vacillating thing the line is, too! As it leaves the Pacific Ocean, it seems to have resolute intentions, but it changes its mind. It follows the straight course east until it reaches the great inland sea, Superior, and then it slips into the water, like a beaver, and does not seek the land again for hundreds of weary miles. It follows the lake center and threads St. Mary's river and buries itself again in Lake Huron and the beautiful St. Clair river and goes through Lake Erie and down the Niagara over the falls, and seeks, through Lake Ontario, the head-waters of the big St. Lawrence. It has then had bath enough and the water is deserted and away it goes across broad meadow-lands and wanders to the east and north, and so to the Atlantic. That is the line. It has no character.

And upon each side of this queer line our farm was now. Part of the way the road ran between the two divisions of the place, but it turned aside at one point because of the lay of the land and the creek went for a distance through what had been one of the Mackenzie fields. This was a conven-



Jason's Map of the Neighborhood.

ience in many respects. In a general way, the parts of the farm as it was now, sloped upward from each other, though much of the land was level. The houses were close together, with only the roads and yards between them. I cannot



draw a thing well nor make a picture nor any sort of outline that can be easily understood, but I have done my best, at least, and tried here to give an idea of the neighborhood. So things were when David and Alice were doing their planning, and so when they were married. They decided to live in the house on the American side, and the one Mackenzie had lived in was given up to Mackenzie's hired man John Cross, who had a wife. We still needed his help. A happier or more hopeful young couple than David and Alice I never saw. They didn't know all that was coming.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A PECULIAR NEIGHBOR.

A load of hay in the crowded street,  
A whiff of the scent of clover,  
A change of thought, vague, incomplete,  
A living a young life over.

A day in August, and clouds of white.  
A shifting of light and shadow,  
The hum of bees and the martin's flight,  
The meadow larks and the meadow.

Brown arms of men and the yellow green  
Of the swaths, the steady swinging  
Of forms of laborers, strong and lean,  
The scythes with their steely ringing.

\* \* \* \*

The roar of trade and the newsboy's call—  
And the dream of a moment's over!  
'Twas a brain-wave came though the nose, and all  
From a whiff of the scent of clover!

—*Away Back.*

There lay the farm, broad and fair, extending on both sides the line, and a good thing for a man with an eye for crops to look upon. Haying was nearly over, and harvesting was beginning, and there was plenty of work to do.

John Cross, though a little man—he had rather weak eyes and a pug nose, and whitish-yellow hair—was a good worker, but we needed more help and hired another man, who came along looking for some such job in harvest-time. Never did men go at the Fall work on a farm with more vim or more good spirits.

The crops promised reasonably well. This bigger undertaking under one head was a branching out for all of us, and we went at the thing with a rush. It wasn't long before those two barns, old Mackenzie's, or, rather, the one which had been his, and our own, were crammed full of what a farmer works for. On the hay side of the barn floor they were full clear up to the purline plates, and on the grain side, over the stables and over the floor itself, they were about as full. It was a good thing to stand on one of the floors and look about. Maybe the smell of things affects me more than it does most people, but I do like to stand in a barn along in the fall, when the crops are just in, and there sniff and sniff, just as a dog does out in the fields when the wind brings along some scent which pleases him. It seems, somehow, as if you got an idea just then of all of nature's richness heaped together. There is the smell of

the clover and the timothy over everything, and then all the richness of the odor of the grain sheaves, and you think, as you draw in the perfume through your nostrils, that you can tell them all apart. May be you do not really; maybe you imagine it, just because you know them so well separately and that there they are before you; but the outcome of them all together is with you, and your senses get half drunk upon it. There are other things, of course—other odors—some of which I have found mentioned in books, which are, maybe, more striking in themselves than any of these air flavors of the barn, but they are another matter. There are roses and violets and pinks and all the things you read about in poetry, and they are all good in their way. They are good, but it seems to me that the people who make pretty verses have missed what are the finest of delights even in that way. Did you ever thrust your nose down into the crest of wild phlox in the lowlands? Did you ever hold a flag blossom close to your face and then draw in its scent, or a liverwort flower just when its color is the richest, or did you ever lean over a bin of apples and catch the smell of them? If you have, then, maybe, you have been lifted in a way and have thought of things you had forgotten.

But the flavor of the barn is good enough.

The barns were full and all had gone well in the filling of them. We had two teams and one was kept on the Mackenzie place and the other on our own. Old man Mackenzie could not do much work, but he took an interest in what was going on, and his advice was good. The old man knew his farm by heart—he knew how much every acre had been cropped and what the chances were for any sort of seeding.

And Alice made the best housekeeper I ever saw. Of course she'd had a good deal of experience after her mother's death, but she must have owned a gift in that direction, anyhow, or she couldn't have done so well. There are hosts of farmer's wives who can provide good meals if only an abundance is given them, and who know how to make good soap, or do all this or that, but there are few of them, I imagine, who think deeply enough to systematize their work, and who, while they are never behindhand, yet manage somehow to have everything always neat about the house and yard and a sort of trimness to it. But Alice had the gift and had Mrs. Long, to help her and Lucinda Briggs' strong arms, and I tell you it was a comfort to go into that place when a day's work

was done. We were comfortably fixed, and no mistake. David, I think, fell more and more in love with his wife as he got to know her better. There are always two women a man marries if he marries at all; one is the woman he thinks he is getting, the other is the one he really gets. And in David's case it was satisfactory either way.

They told old man Mackenzie what they had decided about the mortgage, and Alice laughed when she made him understand that they concluded to look upon him as the meanest kind of a money-lender. The old man laughed too.

West from us, right across the road and reaching up to the boundary line, was the Vincent farm. Vincent was a man of decent standing, a farmer who did as well as the average, or perhaps a little better, but who wasn't what you'd call a good-natured person. He was a tall, gaunt man, with small eyes and a regularly sour look. He was an envious sort of man. I remember well one morning when he came slouching along the road and stopped, leaning up against our fence, with his arms resting on its top. I was pottering over something in the yard, mowing around some currant bushes, I believe, when he spoke to me:

"Well, how are things getting on?"

"Pretty well," said I.

"When d'ye begin thrashing?"

"I don't know; not till some time next month, I guess."

"Where d'ye expect to sell?"

"Don't know that, either, but David has some sort of deal on about the spare grain with a man down in Magone. I guess we'll sell it there, as usual."

"I thought that old man Mackenzie always sold his grain in Rodney?"

So he did, but, you see, it's different now that we've got the two farms in one. It would be foolish to separate the crops. We couldn't do as well."

Vincent thought a minute then mumbled out, "H-m-m, yes; I see," and went shambling down the road. I didn't think much of it at the time, but I thought a good deal about that talk a few months later.

It was getting along in the season and there was little to be done in the way of crop-making, with one exception. Over on the Mackenzie side was one field where there was a second growth of clover, which would pay for the cutting and curing, and we went at it, with good weather for the work.



We were delayed, though, when the cutting was about half done, and so we got the curing clover together hurriedly and into hay-cocks of the old-fashioned sort we made before mowing machines were invented and when the swaths were spread with a pitchfork and got together finally with a hand-rake. What fun we had when I was a boy as the last forkful of a hay-cock went up to the man loading, and the ground was bared where the hay had been. There was certain to be a big meadow-mole there—sometimes four or five of them—and the boy “raking behind the wagon,” as they called it, was on hand then, ready for the slaughter.

He would break his rake sometimes in his excitement and then there would be an interview with his father. A few twigs generally grew about the stumps left in the field, and any father with a jack-knife could trim one of these for use in no time. So, sometimes, the death of the mole would be avenged. Occasionally, instead of the moles, there would be found one of their enemies beneath the haycock, a garter snake with a suspicious bulge about his middle, or, maybe, a long black snake, active and full of fight. If it were a garter snake the hired man, who generally did

the pitching, would seize it by the tail and perform the great country trick of "snapping its head off." If it were the other kind the pitchfork would prove handy. It is better, of course, the way we make hay now, but there is no quality to it and one man is about as good as another. It took a fellow with stuff in him to swing a scythe over a wide swath all day long and be in proper fettle when night came on.

I miss the old ways. The whirr of the machines isn't half as good in one's ears as the singing of the blades through grass. But I'm getting away from my story.

As I was saying, we were delayed in the clover-cutting, but the weather was good and we got it all down finally and cured and were ready to put it away. Both barns were full and David concluded that the only thing to do was to stack the hay just where it could be used most handily for the winter feeding. The sheep, in winter, were sheltered under a big shed a little way from the barn, on our place, and so it was decided to make the stack close by the shed. We made a good bottom with rails and began the hauling. David went to Magone the day this work began, and John Cross and I went at the work. We were

coming from the Mackenzie place with the second load when we met Vincent, who came up and passed us on a buckboard he used in driving about the country. He drew up his horse and talked a little while in his sour way about the clover, saying that he thought pea straw better for wintering sheep, and then drove on. He did not stop, I noticed, when he reached his own place, but kept ahead on the road to Magone, the same one David had taken an hour or two before.

"Guess Vincent must be going to town," said Cross.

"It doesn't make much difference where he is going," I answered. "Wherever it is he'll turn sour any milk he looks at. He's one of the surliest men I ever saw. -And he doesn't like David."

"Of course he doesn't. He's had a grudge against him since David made him take back the potatoes we bought for seed. They wan't pink-eyes at all. I wish he'd say something to me. I'd like to get at him."

I laughed. John Cross, was about as insignificant a man, physically, as ever managed to do a day's work on a farm. He wouldn't weigh over 130 pounds, and he was rather loose-jointed at that. But he'd got an impression that he was one of the

most dangerous men in the community when it came to a square fight, and that it was his duty to be ready to fight off-hand whenever he or any of his friends might be imposed upon. The wonder was that he hadn't been crippled by somebody. He had come home from raisings and town meetings, once or twice, a little the worse for wear, but he didn't seem to learn anything. He would fight, or at least get ready to fight, at the drop of the hat. I never saw anyone else like him—such a bantam!

We got along with the hauling pretty well, and by the middle of the afternoon we had what began to look something like a stack. Clover is easier to handle than timothy and much better in loading. It hangs together so that there is no trouble about the binding of the courses, and you can carry as big a load as you want your team to draw. We were just coming out of the Mackenzie field and turning into the highway with a load on the style of which I rather prided myself, when I noticed Vincent's sorrel coming down the road, and noticed, too, that there was another man with Vincent on the buckboard. I paid no attention to them till they drew up beside us.

The man sitting with Vincent was a rather

slouchy-looking fellow, with sharp eyes, and was not dressed like a farmer. He was not what you would call well-dressed, but you could see that he came from town. He jumped off the buck-board and stood in front of the horses, so that they stopped.

"What is your name?" he called out to me.

"My name is Jason Moore, and you'd better get out of the way of the team."

The man laughed: "I don't think I will just now," he answered. "I want to know what you mean by bringing that hay across the line?"

"Who are you?"

"Well, I don't mind telling you that my name is Gaherty, and that I'm a United States officer. You are hauling Canadian hay into the United States without paying duty. I'm told you've been doing the thing already. Now, you drive ahead across the middle of the road so far that your horse's feet touch the grass on this side, and I'll seize the whole outfit! That's all."

John Cross began to take off his coat.

## CHAPTER V.

### THEY DISCUSS THINGS.

“Kape off the grass!” the copper said,  
“Ye little spalpeen, don’t ye see  
The wooden sign forninst yer knee?  
“It’s shtuck up there fur to be read!  
Ye needn’t shtand there; ye ill-bred  
Gossoon, and rowl your tongue at me!  
Kape off the grass!”

Bedad, O’ll loikely break yer head  
Av ye don’t make yerself less free  
When frayquintin’ the park!” said he.  
“O’iil make ye wish that ye wor dead!  
Kape off the grass!”

*Rondeaux in Urbe.*

What could I do? There I was on the load of hay, and there was this strange man below, and there was John Cross taking off his coat! I knew—I could not tell why; there was something in his manner I suppose—that the stranger was telling the truth; that he was really a customs officer, with the proper authority from somewhere, and that we would be wise to be careful. It showed in his way. But John Cross, I knew, could not see that.

He only felt that a stranger was attempting an extraordinary and what seemed to him a most insolent thing, and that there ought to be a fight. And he was going to give a chance for it, right off, in his own absurd and useless way. It could end only in trouble for us. That was what flashed through my mind as I sat up there on the front of that load of hay. I yelled out to John Cross, and just from force of habit he paid attention in a second:

“Take care of the lines!”

They call them “reins” in most of the books I have read, but in the country we call them “lines.” As I spoke I threw them down and he jumped for them, lest the horses should run away. He gathered them up and stood there, coatless as he was, as I slid down from the load and stood beside him.

“Look here, John,” I said, “I don’t want you to say a word nor do a thing just now. If I want you I’ll call on you. You just hang onto the lines and don’t let the horses get the start of you. I don’t know what all this thing is, but I do know that we’ll get at the right of it. Leave it to me.”

John Cross nodded rather sullenly, and then I turned to the man:



"I don't quite understand, Mr. Gaherty. I suppose you're an officer, but I'd like to be sure. Will you please show me your papers?"

He showed me his papers and then I knew all right enough that he was really a customs officer, that he represented the United States, and that, for the present at least, it would be very foolish to oppose him in any way. Besides, I expected David home any moment. I knew, well enough, that Vincent had made all the trouble, but I could not prove it, and so I said nothing to him. I spoke to Mr. Gaherty:

"I'm only a hired man here. I don't know much about it. I only know that we are decent people, who don't want to violate the law, whatever it may be. But the farm is Mr. Long's, who has just gone to Magone, and I'd rather leave it to him. He ought to be back soon. Meanwhile I'll leave the load just as it is. I don't want to make trouble."

"You're a sensible man," said Mr. Gaherty. "I can't wait, though, for your boss to come back. I may be around in the morning. But let me warn you: This is the line between Canada and the United States. Don't violate the law by crossing it with anything dutiable."

And then he climbed into the buckboard with Vincent, who had an evil smile on his face all the time, and the two rode off to the farmer's house, which was in full sight of ours and from which the load of hay as it now stood could be plainly seen.

We unhitched the horses. I told John Cross to take them to the barn and they—man and horses—went tramping off up the road. As for me, I sat down on the wagon-tongue, close to the hay, and waited. I knew that David must be back pretty soon, and I wanted to be the first to tell him of what had happened. I felt how it must affect the outcome of his big new venture, and I wanted to put the situation to him mildly and reasonably, so that he would do nothing rash or inconsiderate. I had not to sit there a great while. I saw a spot of dust away down the road, and as it came nearer I saw that it was the team and David. I braced myself for the explanation and was a little nervous about it. He drove up and called out heartily:

"Hello, Jason! How are things going? That's a good-looking stack, so far. But what's happened? Where are the horses? Have you had a breakdown?"

I told him there had been no breakdown, but something had happened a little out of the com-

mon: "It seems, David," said I, "that you have a queer sort of a farm. You can't drive all over it."

"What do you mean?" he said "What's the matter?"

And then I told him of all we had done and of what had taken place. He seemed a trifle dazed at first, and, after I had got through, had nothing to say for a time. Then he broke out:

"They mean to say, do they, that I cannot move things about on my own farm? They mean to say, that, because I have married a Canadian girl, I must be ruined! Of course, I understand that Vincent is at the bottom of it but that doesn't matter. He is nothing. He is merely a vicious man who has a chance to gratify a spite. I never thought of it before, but I suppose that, as the lands are, they really can bother us. It is pretty hard, Jason. What shall we do?"

I told him that I didn't know. I said. "They are here upon us. That is all, and I guess they're all right, so far as the law goes. The only question is, what are you to do? It is a puzzling sort of thing. It appears to me, if I were you, I'd let the load of hay stay where it is and figure on the thing a little. You know that something very serious has happened, you know that you can't

buck against the law, though you never thought of that when you married Alice Mackenzie and took old Mackenzie's farm. But there it is!"

The great, hulking, handsome young fellow, with his troubled face, looked at me and laughed in a senseless sort of way:

"Yes?" he said, "I suppose you're right. And I guess what you say is the only thing to do—that is, inquire into the situation and then be as sharp and adroit and wise as possible. But, you see, Jason, I'm a little broken up. I thought I had a sure thing. I thought I was a mighty smart fellow, with lots of good luck, and that I'd got the dearest woman in the world, and, right on top of that, one of the biggest chances possible for making money matters easy; of making things pleasant for her and of caring, as they should be cared for through all their growing years, for the children who may come to us. I don't know anything about children. I do know, though, that when they come, the woman is wrapped up in them and that the best way to serve her is to provide for their welfare. And so I've thought about money and the children, as, it seems to me, a man who cares for his wife should always do. And it is money and success in my humble way—no, it isn't

humble; the farmers are the biggest of them all—that I have cared for since Alice and I were married. And now comes this thing—the man Gaherty is nothing; he is but the agent of this big something that bothers us along the line—and he, no doubt, is doing the best he can. He may be in other things a good man or a bad man. That doesn't count. What are we to do?"

I couldn't answer him. How could I? Here we were all innocent and unconscious; two families blended together, and with all the force of one great government launched upon us to prevent our living prosperously and in happiness. And I knew, though I did not say it, that one government meant two; that if the United States custom-house officers were after us, those from the Canadian side would follow naturally, as things were then adjusted, and that our troubles were but begun. I thought a long time before I ventured to say a word:

"Keep cool, David," I said. "After all it's only an odd situation, one that belongs only to a narrow strip of people laid across the continent like a string. Surely, we can meet that puzzle, it is such a little one."

He laughed out, rather harshly, for him:

"You speak without thinking," he said. "It is *not* merely a string of people laid from sea to sea. Of course we who are upon the line feel most sharply the hard burden. We can each open our two eyes, and see what is all so wrong and it is we who, thoughtlessly—as I have done in the agreement about the farms—must most often wander into trouble, but our misfortunes are only the accident of being where we are and the other farmer, or any other man, beyond us feels it, just the same, and never knows it."

"That may be," I said, "but you see, David, it doesn't matter just now. What we have to consider is what to do with the load of hay? If we bring it across, I know we will be jumped upon, and there goes the load of hay and, maybe, the wagon and horses! It is on the Canadian side, now, and the stack is on the American side. But, if you want to let it stay as it is, I can shape up the stack a little so that no hurt will come if it rains to-night and then you will have time to do a little figuring. How does that strike you? You agree that we are helpless for the time. Why not leave the load as it is, let me fix the stack, and then, after supper, we can talk with old man Mackenzie and decide what we shall do? Isn't that the better way?"

He's a good boy, that David. He's a big fellow, who could throw an ordinary man over a fence, and who could lick me easily enough, but somehow he clings to me, just as in the old days when I used to make hickory bows and arrows for him—the arrows were blunt-headed, with a shingle-nail sunk in the point sometimes, for the boy liked to know where he hit when he shot at things—and he yielded at once to my idea:

"I want to talk with Alice, anyhow," said he. This last remark of his might seem ungracious, but it was all right. I like to know a man who talks with his wife about things; for he is generally a good man, and, besides, David was but lately married. The idea of what was to be done came from me, and David knew that I would at least try to think of what was best for him, and I was glad that he had acted as he did. And so we went up to the gateway together, and he went into the house and I went out to the stack to see what could be done.

To fix up a half-finished stack which will stand a possible rain-storm is not an easy task as anyone who has ever tried it will say. There are the courses and the binder to them in the center, all lying there flat and broad to the sky and what may



come from it, and to turn that mass of hay at its top into something sharp-pointed and closely knit—something that will shed rain—is no easy job for the ordinary man who doesn't know things. I climbed up a short ladder we had, got on the stack and dug away at that clover. I don't know just how I did it—I don't suppose any farmer who has had to provide suddenly against a rain-storm can tell how he planned—but I got that stack in such shape that it might rain heavily and I would feel safe about the outcome; and then, all sweating and unkempt, I went to the house and washed myself from the tin-basin at the end of the rain trough—we had found a button-wood big enough to make a rain trough, which is only a big tree hollowed out to catch the water from the roof—and then went into the house.

The family was there. It was a good-looking family. It was clear enough that John Cross had gone home without dropping in to tell of the trouble. So they were all good-natured. Alice was looking at David, old Mackenzie was full of old Scotch or Canadian stories, though he said he didn't feel well, and David—I liked his courage—was as jolly as if nothing had happened. It was good all round. I ate heartily with the rest, and

then, while the women cleared the table, David and old Mackenzie and I went out into the sitting-room to smoke. We settled down for a time and said nothing. Then Mackenzie began to talk to David about that clover field and its late crop in a manner I was glad of, because it led directly to what must be the main discussion of the evening.

"It's a good crop," said the old man, "and I didn't suppose it would do as well. I've known that field since a time before you were born, David. I think that top-dressing you gave it made it as it is. Put the crop in a good stack, and there you are with so much added for the wintering—not poor stuff, either, and the best kind of feed or whatever you may want to turn the stack to. It is so much clear gain."

I laughed to myself, despite all our troubles, to think how innocent the old man was of what was going on and of how he was rubbing it into David. But that young man did not even look at me nor crack a smile. The case was too serious for him. He looked at his father-in-law and said shortly enough:

"I don't think we'll finish that stack."

The old man was astonished: "Not finish the stack, my boy," he said, "why not?"

"Because I cannot," said David. "The government has announced through a smug-faced fellow that I cannot build a stack of hay from my own farm and on my own farm." And then he told the old man all about it—how we had the stack nearly done, and of Vincent's course, and of the coming of the custom-house man, and of what happened afterward. Old Mackenzie, listened at first with a grin, but as David went on with his story that died away, and the man listening became interested.

"An' so ye canna' build your stack?" he said, something of the old Scotch way of speaking coming back to him in his earnestness.

"No," said David.

The old man had nothing to say for a moment or two. He was thinking hard. Then he spoke deliberately; he had dropped his Scotch:

"Well, I suppose it's all for the best. I'm not very well acquainted with the laws, but, man, they're all right. Good men did make them."

The two had drawn up to the table and I had followed, and was sitting at one side and, in a way, between them. I could look into both their faces.

David answered: "I don't know about it. What is the difference between a man here or a thousand out from here? Why should we not be

all alike? And why should a decent man, attending to his own affairs and paying his debts, be hunted because he owns these acres or those acres? Answer me that!

## CHAPTER VI.

### A NEW ELEMENT.

They brought the babe before the King;  
One of them had named it,  
Each of them now claimed it.  
Said the King, with a laugh:  
"Justice here is more than nice;  
Each of them shall have a slice;  
We'll divide the babe in half!"  
Wailing then there was from one:  
Justice really was done,  
While the monarch had his fun.  
But, they say,  
We are not so wise to-day;  
Literally, now, we act;  
We divide the babe in fact!

—*Morals from Solomon.*

The old man seemed a little puzzled. It was some time before he answered, and when he did I thought he weighed his words more carefully than usual. He looked at David sorrowfully:

"Ye're in a tight fix, my boy; there's no question of that, but I doubt not we'll come out all right, somehow. It's hard, but laws are main good.

We should be little more than the beasts which perish without them. And these laws which relate to the tax upon things carried over the border must surely be good like the rest, for wise men builded them, and there's the Queen's taxes to be met, and there's your own, and how else would ye wisely accomplish it?"

David became excited: "I understand it all!" he burst out. "At least I understand the general idea of it. But what is gained by it? Here we are, a lot of men on the world. Other men thought they knew how big the world was, but they didn't know anything of the sort. One of them took ships and found a new continent, something they had hardly dreamed of, and they straggled over here from all nations to populate it. They had the usual wars and struggles of all sorts, because men are fools, and the end of it all was that one fighting race—the one to which we belong—got hold of it. Then these people, the people of this fighting race, must needs fight among themselves, and the end was that one group, the home stayers, held on to one portion and the other group, the bolters, held on to the rest, and they patched up some sort of arrangement for so living; and here we are. But the blood is the same, still.

We ought to be one and not to harass each other. We have made an imaginary line between us, and all along it is friction and hurt, a sort of inflammation started which extends all over each body and makes it less healthy. What sense is there in that?"

Said the old man: "They are two different nations. It's like two men trying to get the best of each other, don't ye see? In business they are figuring only on the dollars. Nations don't be fools, as once, and fight over insults to royalty, and all that. It's all the dollar, and like the men trading. Don't ye see?"

"Oh, yes, I see; but we hold in contempt brothers who try to cheat others or take any advantage in a bargain. And wouldn't we have a double contempt for two brothers cast on an island alone who should feel that way! We're nothing but brothers on an island. We speak English; we are of the same blood.

What's the difference between Canada, especially all Ontario and the North and West and this upper part of Quebec, and some of the Canadian Atlantic coast people, and us Americans? We're all alike. We had the same great-great-great-grandfathers, and, with some of us, the relation is a great deal nearer. We are on this island—



on this continent—together, to get along the best way we can. We have the same idea I know of the old home, the glorious island which has bred such a lot of fighters of us; but why should we be separated over here? I don't blame one lot for having the fancy to cling to the old flag or the old style of government any more than I blame my own people for liking their own way better; that is a matter of accident and sentiment; but I do think there is no necessity for extending the idea into business and crippling everybody. I'm as proud of old England as you are, as proud as any man in all the Dominion of Canada, and she is as much mine as his; but I don't want to be wrecked in my own affairs by a brother who is here on the big island with me, and I don't want to wreck him either. I don't want to let sentiment, which may be only a fancy and not a real manly sentiment after all, interfere with business. It hurts him a great deal more than it does me—I know that—but it doesn't make any difference. Why can't you Canadians arrange it so that you can carry out your own ideas as to what flag you should get excited over, and at the same time get all the advantages of the position you occupy? Your young men come over here—you are losing

your best English blood every day—because they can do better on this side the line. I know scores of them, leading men in the towns all along the lakes, whom I met or learned of while on the propellor, and they are among the very best. They left home because they could not do well under the laws as they are. Look at Chicago! Throw away the line and what would not Toronto be—the great city at the other end of the line of great lakes! I tell you—though I never thought of how it would hit us humble people before we joined these farms of ours—that I have studied these silly laws and read what all the papers on each side have to say, and it makes me mad!”

He paused for a moment and then broke out again: “It makes me mad, too, that blood tells so much less along this American and Canadian border than it does anywhere else. Do you remember how once an American captain, regardless of all law between nations, took part in a coast fight between British and Chinese, when the British were overmatched, ready to lose his commission rather than see them beaten, and how two nations supported him? Do you remember more lately, how the British after bombarding Alexandria cheered and forgot their military order

when they come upon the American marines trying to preserve civilized ways in the town and as ready to face Arabi Pasha as were the British themselves? Do you not know that anywhere in the world, except along this ridiculous border line, the brothers in blood stick to each other in great emergencies! Here alone they squabble and forget what is for the good of all. It is unnatural and strange. It is the work of the petty, men, among the two countries' leaders!"

The young fellow leaned back breathless after that great political oration. Old man Mackenzie was rather dazed. As for me I was astonished; I'd no idea that David had ever given the matter so much thought. I'd read the papers for years myself and been always interested in the debates in congress and in the Canadian parliament, but I didn't suppose David had paid any attention to the thing. I was rather proud of him. I was glad that he had thought about the matter—one that must soon be of yet more importance than now—even as we were talking it was important enough to us, surely. But I had no suggestion to make. I had thought about the laws, as I have said, but I was thinking just now a good deal more about that stack and that load of hay and the troubles of

which I knew we had now only the beginning. Finally I ventured to speak:

"It's this way, David," I said. "Right or wrong, we've got to obey the laws, or we shall come to grief. The men who carry out the laws have got their eyes on us now, all through old Vincent, and we must get out of the fix the best way we can. How will this do? In the morning I'll go over to Vincent's and ask this man Gaherty to come over here. Then we'll all go out to the load together and I guess we can arrange it so that he'll go away satisfied. And, after that, we'll get along somehow."

Both David and old Mackenzie thought this a reasonable plan and we decided to follow it. While we were talking John Cross had come in and stood there with his sallow face showing oddly in the lamplight, listening to what was said and leaning forward eagerly, toward the end of the talk. "I'll be on hand," he said, "and if that hangdog Vincent comes over I'll lick him! Mark that!"

The dog barked and I went outside and stood in the veranda, looking down the road. It was a very pretty night. The full moon was shining over everything so brightly that objects in its way cast a dark shadow and it was strange and odd down

where the woods made a part of one field look as if painted with ink in all sorts of queer figures. The bushes on one side of the road shaded it a part of the way across, so that it lay in two strips reaching away, one black and the other a bright yellow. And down there, along the yellow strip, a man was coming. That was what had made the dog bark.

The man, who was afoot, came on until he was nearly opposite the house, then half stopped and looked about him. He saw me on the stoop and called out:

"Hello, there!"

"Hello!"

"Whose house is that?"

"David Long's."

"Is he at home?"

"Yes."

The man turned from the road, opened the gate and came up toward the house. He was a short, thick-set man, with side whiskers and a ruddy face. He was not a bad-natured looking fellow yet there was a kind of business way about him. I knew him for a Canadian the moment I looked at him, not because he came from the Canada side, but because of something in his way. You can't

explain it, but, on the border, we always know to which side a man belongs without asking. We can tell even before he speaks. After that, of course, it is an easy matter for anybody.

As the man reached the steps he looked up good-humoredly: "Fine night," he said, and I answered that I agreed with him at the same time putting my head in at the door and calling out to David that some one wanted to see him. He came out just as the man reached the stoop and, asked the visitor what he could do for him. In a bustling, cheerful, jerky way, the man explained:

"I'm a customs' agent, you see—Montreal district; sent down here; special letter from a man named Vincent; said you were bringing things over the line; made some inquiries before I got here; not very serious case, I hold. Thought I'd come right to you and ask about it. What ye got to say?"

David drew a short breath—the thing was beginning to tell on him—but kept from breaking out roughly. He couldn't very well be mad at the man, the fellow was so straightforward about it all. He managed to speak calmly enough:

"I know all about it; I've had a taste of the same thing already to-day. One of our custom-house officers has been here. It's about a load of-hay,

though I suppose there'll be other things." And then he went on plainly and told the man of the trade with the farms, of what had been done, of Vincent's course, and of the visit of Gaherty and what had happened. The Canadian seemed mightily amused.

"It's a bad case, man; I'll admit that," he said, "but we've got to do our duty. The Dominion has an interest in that load of hay as well as your Uncle Sam. We'll have to see about it in the morning. Can you tell me of any place near here where I can get a bed?"

David said that the best thing the stranger could do would be to walk right in and sleep in the house for which he was, maybe, going to make trouble, and he agreed, laughing. He said his name was Jennison; that he came originally from St. Thomas, in Ontario, though assigned to the Montreal district. As we got better acquainted with him he seemed none the worse—just a bluff, hearty, good-natured machine of the tax-collecting system.

And in the morning, as soon as the early work about the place was done and breakfast eaten, I went to Vincent's and asked Gaherty to come over. The two men were standing in the barnyard looking at one of Vincent's horses as I reached the



place, but I didn't speak to the farmer at all. He seemed a little too mean a thing, to me. As for Gaherty, he climbed the fence and we went at once to the load of hay. David and Jennison came out and John Cross came down from the old Mackenzie house. We gathered about the load and then David spoke out:

"There's the load of hay, gentlemen; what am I going to do with it?"

I'd made Gaherty and Jennison acquainted with each other's names, and thought that, being in the same sort of business, they'd be mighty friendly at once, but I was mistaken. They didn't seem to take to each other at all. Of the two I didn't much blame the Canadian. He was straightforward enough, at least, but the other man had shifty eyes and I didn't like his smooth, gaunt, face, blue where the beard had been shaved away, and his thin, hard lips. The Canadian seemed only doing his duty. The other seemed really to like the work. It was he who spoke first:

"Well, I suppose I ought to seize the whole thing. You were violating the law, though I didn't see you do it, for there's the stack of hay brought from the side where the hay didn't grow, and I'm told you've been doing the same thing

with all about the farm. However, all I'll ask of you now is that you pay duty on this load you are bringing over."

"But it isn't over yet."

Now it chanced we knew just where the line ran, which was, of course, not all the time along the middle of the road. There were little washouts where the track swerved, and so a wagon passing along might be one minute all in Canada and the next all in the United States. Just here the track bent to the Canadian side, and, as I had cramped the wagon to leave the roadway clear, I had swung even the fore-wheels beneath the load nearly around onto Canadian soil. As it stood, there was part of one wheel, nearly all the wagon tongue and about two feet of the load of hay on the American side. John Cross hitched up to a light wagon we had on the American side, and brought a hay-knife and cut down squarely through the load and carted off the hay, to top off the stack a little more with. Then we took out the wagon tongue and took off the one wheel—this Gaherty made us do, under threat of seizing it all—and after that he, rather sullenly, consented to guess at the weight of the hay and the value of the wagon tongue and wheel, and David paid the duty, at the rate of \$4 a ton

on the hay and 20 per cent, *ad valorem* on the wagon. When all was done the thing looked funny. There stood the sheared-off load of hay, standing up squarely against the line; there was the wagon, tongueless, with one wheel off and propped up by a piece of rail, and there stood a lot of full-grown men, supposably in their senses, grouped about the spot. Gaherty seemed to me to be very well satisfied with what he had done. Jennison hadn't anything to say, though he had called attention to the fact when John Cross, who had handled the hay-knife, had happened once or twice to swing the knife off a trifle into the American side. He didn't think it right to have any American hay exported into Canada, he said, with a grin. Gaherty didn't seem to appreciate the joke. But of all the people about, John Cross interested me most. He was, ordinarily, a fellow with a great deal to say of a trifling sort, yet, this morning, he did not open his lips unless compelled. He had been more quiet than usual for some weeks—he was troubled with dyspepsia this summer—but his manner puzzled me. He appeared worried over our troubles more than was either David or I. We ourselves, could not help looking at each other and laughing once in awhile, the whole affair was so

absurd, but John Cross never smiled. He seemed brooding and malcontent. As we stood there, the curious job ended at last, I chanced to look up the road and saw a man coming.

"There's Vincent," I said.

And John Cross began to take off his coat again.

## CHAPTER VII.

### AT TABLE AND IN THE WOODS.

The coon went out one night;  
Said he I will seek my love;  
My soft-furred, dark-eyed love I'll seek  
By the oozy bed of the winding creek,  
Where the boughs are dense above—  
My tawny, timorous love, my bride—  
Together we'll creep by the water's side,  
And, O, I will serve her well!  
I'll crush the stubbornest mussel-shell,  
And a delicate bit she'll eat;  
And the burrowing crab and the stranded fish,  
And the tender frog; each woodland dish  
Will I lay at her pretty feet.  
O, soon,  
'Neath the light of the autumn moon,  
While the forest sounds with the mud-hen's croon  
And the quavering cry of the flying loon,  
I will meet my love said the coon.

—*Observations of Moreau.*

There we stood, the group of us, with our feelings and fancies as the case might be, after what had happened, and there was Vincent, the cause of it all, coming up the road. I wanted to hurt the fellow. But in a second came a thought of all the

foolishness of it, I was as cool as any cucumber—I don't know that cucumbers are cool, but that is what we say in the country. Of course it was all unwise. Of course I ran up alongside of Cross and swerved in ahead of him, and there met Vincent. There was nothing else for me to do. "You'd better go back to the house," I said. "You haven't really any business here, and John Cross doesn't like you and is going to lick you, if he can. If he can't I don't know but I'll help him."

The man stopped and hesitated; "I'll not go back," he said.

All this time John Cross had stood moving around restlessly listening to every word we said. Suddenly he made a dash and went by me in a second and jumped on Vincent. There was a hit or two and a grapple and I ran in between them, and lifted up, and there they were apart, and I threatened, in the excitement of the moment to break the back of either of them who dared to begin fighting again. I'm not a fighter. I'm afraid at all times, but I'm kind o' big and burly and it stood to reason that I could lick any such men as they were. They knew it and that was the end of the difficulty for the time, and Vincent went back to his house and John Cross asked

David what work he should do that day and went away as well, and that was all there was of the fracas. As for the rest of us, we stood and talked about the tariff, and the load of hay, and no better conclusion was attained than had been reached the night before. Gaherty who seemed to be satisfied with what had happened went back to Vincent's house, and Jennison, first trying to see if he could not get a room with David, went across the line and found a home for a time with good Canadian Farmer Latimer, who believed what he read and was a conservative from away back. That was the end of the business about the load of hay. What we did with what was left on the Canadian side, I will tell later. What was done with the stack upon the American side, was but what was done with any ordinary stack of hay anywhere in the United States. It was topped out a little better and, later, fed to the stock. The happenings of the morning were naturally of interest to us all and I was satisfied when I saw things adjusted, but, after it was done, there came upon me a doubtful mood. I was thinking all the time, of John Cross. There was something so strange in his way of acting, that I wanted to know about it. I wanted to see what was the matter with him

and at noon I went up to his house. I found him and his wife and children, at dinner, and I may say this mid-day dinner was a great meal all along the line. John met me at the door and his wife came a moment later and then we went in and sat down together and ate. What I ate did not suit me. It seemed to me that then for the first time I realized what it is that may be awry about the farmer, that for the first time I understood just why his stomach is so often all wrong and why the man who is a man appears not so to all the world. As we sat down to dinner, I noted what there was upon the table and here I must venture foolishly to talk at large. I must tell of what, it seems to me, may change in a degree, the very heart beats of a nation. And a good deal of it is pork. The wife of John Cross was a thrifty, considerate woman of the ordinary type. She cooked what her mother had cooked and thought no more about it. Upon the table were fried pork, bread and boiled potatoes and a side dish or two, the side dishes because I was there—and nothing else to speak of. There was coffee and at the end of the meal we had pie. That is the regular mid-day food of some hundreds of thousands, all throughout the middle-north, of the great Anglo-Saxon



population of the continent. That is what is counted food good enough. Some grand bodies will stand it, some others, and that of John Cross was one of them, must fail. A failure means dyspepsia, morbidness and a change in every way.

It means that a man is robbed of that which is best within him, that his brain is warped by what affects his stomach, that he becomes more or less a senseless clod, or something vicious, or something insane. Maybe I am what they call a crank on this subject, but I have thought upon it much.

The worst of it is that there is no excuse for the farmer who does not live as he ought. It costs him no more to fare well and have variety, than to live in a way that hurts him. There was not much difference in cost, but there was little likeness between the dinner on John Cross' table and that upon the table in our own house the same day.

I've heard that men with plenty of food of one sort may yet die of what they call scurvy, because the system demands something besides meat and potted things. A good many farmers are tempting scurvy all the time, when what is good for man is at their very doors. They may raise a little spinach, or, when cowslips are plenty in the flats, may pick a mess occasionally, but they do not ap-

preciate how wholesome a dish of greens upon the table is, and born, as they have been, in the very midst of growing things, it is a fact that not one in ten knows how abundant good things are. What delicious greens wild mustard makes, or dandelion tops, or turnip tops, or dock of one sort, and then, it costs but a little effort to sow beet seed broadcast in any little corner of a field, and when the young beets are an inch or two in length to have something which, boiled tops and all, and with good vinegar, is about as delicious a thing as may go into a man's mouth. And there is many a morning in early Fall when a man can go out into the field with a pail and fill it with great pink-lined mushrooms in fifteen minutes of time. Cooked with butter and pepper and salt, there is what, even to think of, makes one's mouth water. And then there are the regular vegetables in abundance, and green peas, and green corn, and string beans, and things of that sort. A few cresses planted in the creek will spread and yield forever afterward all that can be eaten of the crisp, sharp-tasting stuff, which goes so well with bread and butter. And there are radishes and cucumbers and such things, not old and wilted and tough as they get them in town, but fresh from the garden to the

table. As for another thing, asparagus, it is, I understand, counted quite a delicacy in the city; but in the country the average farmer does not even raise it. I remember that when I was a boy they used to have a bed of it somewhere about the place—"sparrowgrass" they called it—and they always let it form its green, feathery top and ripen its red berries, and then they would cut a lot of it for filling the empty fire-place in summer time. It was counted very pretty for such decoration, but the young stalks were never eaten. That had to be learned from the city, and it isn't very well learned yet. As for tomatoes, they raised them, too, only because they were big and red and pretty, but they did not often eat them when I was young: "love apples" they called them.

Of fruits and berries there need be no end, fresh from tree or bush or plant in summer, and kept preserved for winter. And all these cost nearly nothing—only a little labor. It is almost so with the meats. There is an escape from the salt pork where farmers choose to help each other in the matter. A steer killed in winter will give three or four families who go into partnership fresh meat, and there are calves that can be divided in the spring, and in mid-summer a fat wether after

shearing is little sacrifice to the flock, and makes good mutton. And chickens and turkeys and ducks on a farm may be said to raise themselves. There are eggs, too, and between the fresh egg of the country and the egg I've eaten in the towns there isn't much comparison. A fresh egg is about the most toothsome thing in all the world, but I know many a farmer who keeps all his eggs to sell for maybe, less than a cent apiece, while he still eats that salt pork. It is curious.

When it comes to more fanciful good things, though—I mean the pies and puddings, and such things good housewives make—why, with flour and eggs and milk and cream and butter in abundance, and little more than sugar to get from town, the country, if there be good sense and knowingness in the kitchen, is the place to get what is really great.

As I have already said, we were most fortunate. Alice could cook all things in English ways, and Mrs. Long was a cook as deft, of Yankee type. Alice, determined to be all a good wife should be, and, "house-proud" as anyone I ever saw, soon learned all Mrs. Long could teach her, and Lucinda Briggs was a great helper—and how we fed! It was worth while to see Alice at her work, and I've

often looked in at her through the window. There she would stand with her sleeves rolled up above the elbows on her round, white arms, and her hands in the dough, or whatever the mixture she was preparing might chance to be, and you could see that she was as enthusiastic over the duty and the housewifely triumph coming as any man in any enterprise you could conceive of—an engineer with a huge bridge to build, or a general before a battle. And Mrs. Long and Lucinda Briggs would be hovering round assisting Alice? sometimes, especially when Yankee dishes were in hand, giving advice amid the work. There was one English dish that caught us all. It was cheese-cake.

Do you know what a cheesecake is? Few Americans know anything of that, to me, the most delicious of all pastry, yet it is a simple dish, and simply made. You but begin as if you were going to make cheese. The rich, fresh milk is put into some big vessel, and the rennet is put in, and when it all begins to form a mass you cut it criss-cross in little squares with a long knife. That is to let out the whey, which rises to the top. And, finally you pour off the whey and take out the white curd and hang it up in a bag of some open stuff to let the whey remaining drip away, and at the end you

have what is like a cheese just started, and that is seasoned with lemon and sugar and nutmeg, and is used just as a custard for little pies. There is nothing else in the world to equal what you get then in the way of pastry.

And from out the knowledge of Alice came English pork pies, in their season, and deep meat and game pies, for there were ruffed grouse and quail and squirrels and rabbits about us still, and plum-puddings in the winter, and dishes such as those sturdy islanders across the water, like. And from the wisdom of Mrs. Long came mince and pumpkin pies, and doughnuts and custards, and the half a hundred other dainties which have delighted the New Englanders. There was molasses from the maples and honey from the bees. We were in luck upon that homestead.

But at the table of John Cross, where, hired man though he was, there was no less abundance were it taken, there were no such meals. There was the dyspepsia-breeding food of which I have spoken; which has done such evil in the country. John Cross showed what the food could do.

He was at this time thin and gaunt, and his cheeks sank in below the bones which were beneath his eyes. The Adam's apple in his throat stuck

out in a sharp point. Upon his forehead were the brown places they call "moth spots," though I don't think most dyspeptics show them. He had worked hard enough; he should have tossed off the effects of even that unhealthy diet, as so many thousands of farmers do, but he didn't happen to be built that way. He was a man naturally buoyant and good-hearted, but he wasn't strong enough for the test. It may be the stomach he inherited was not of the right kind. He was giving way.

I tried to make it pleasant for Cross, and to talk about the farm and the Fall work, but I couldn't get him interested. Then an idea occurred to me which I made use of. I knew that he had always liked to go cooning, and I proposed to go later in the week and see if we couldn't get one or two of the prowlers which were stripping off the ears of the young corn in the east field, close by the wood. He brightened up a little and agreed to it before I left, and one night, later in the week, we two went out. The old dog about the place knew his business when there was a coon to find, and he soon had one up a beech, and we cut the tree down, and there was a pretty fight. But John Cross did not jump about and get hilarious and excited as he had done before. As we walked home I asked him



what was the matter. "Don't you feel well?" I said.

"Not very well," he answered. "There's a sinking at my stomach most of the time, but that isn't what bothers me. I'm thinking about that fellow Gaherty and of Vincent."

"What's the matter with them?"

"Oh, nothing's the matter with them, except that neither of them have any right to live. They ain't fit for it; that's all."

I didn't know what to say to a man in such a mood, and so, for the time, the matter ended.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### WHAT HAPPENED IN AUTUMN.

Hoar frosts have come again; the sun's rays smite  
Each morn, and burn away a dust of white  
That lies on everything. The frost has done  
Its ripening work: the ruffed grouse has begun  
To feed on thorn-apples, the turkey's found  
Rich banquets under beech leaves on the ground:  
The husks of hickory nuts are opening wide  
And nuts are falling upon every side.  
Perched in the hickory's top, and impudent,  
Is the red squirrel, restlessly content,  
And chirring, chattering, leering, as his mood  
May turn. The small Thersites of the wood  
Finds with the time for labor time for play,  
And, busy little braggart, through the day  
Boasts of his hoarding to the loitering birds,  
Then toils a half hour to make good his words,  
And rests again and gibbers 'till he's reeled  
Off to his taste some scandal of the field;  
Tells how Miss Mink has lost her pretty tail,  
Through disregard for traps and taste for quail,  
And dare not meet young Martin her adored;  
How Mrs. Muskrat quarrels with her lord,  
How Mrs. Chipmunk's buckwheat cellar's full,  
And how her sleeping-room is lined with wool,

Though Mr. Chipmunk died in early spring  
And hard her lot was thought to be, poor thing;  
“Still, if young Billy Gopher wants to call,  
It is nobody’s business after all!”  
Hoar frosts have come again, the frosts of fall.

*The Pulse of Autumn.*

For a day or two nothing very serious happened. We saw nothing of Gaherty nor of Jennison, though we heard that each was at his boarding place and making himself comfortable. We had a consultation and it was agreed that, as things were, it was better for us to observe the customs laws carefully and give neither of the men opportunity or excuse for interfering with us. We departed a little from the rule one night when we separated the horses and cattle and harness and wagons and machinery, and got on each side of the line what was most likely to be needed there. We did this without discovery, though I think Vincent and Gaherty must have guessed at it, for Gaherty came down the road next morning and stood leaning over the fence opposite the barnyard at our place and that which had been old Mackenzie’s, and seemed making a study of what he saw. I think he knew that something had happened, but he was not very familiar yet with our stock or implements and could prove nothing. I saw him slouching back

to Vincent's place again, looking sullen and disappointed, but he did not say anything to me though I nodded and said "Howdy." He was not a man who made any point of manners. As for Jennison, he didn't show himself at all until he came across one afternoon with Latimer's old shotgun over his shoulder and asked me if I knew in which piece of woods there was the best chance for black squirrels? He was a different sort of man from Gaherty. He didn't seem particularly to like the work he was put to, though he attended it faithfully enough, while Gaherty, one could see, delighted in all the spying and seizing he might do or find a chance for. I was ashamed of the contrast between the two men, it was so much to the disadvantage of the one from the United States.

And so it got to be Fall, and the crops were in, and the late plowing and general pottering about the place, made up all the work left in hand. I kept a bright lookout—for it had been agreed that the duty of keeping an eye on the two officers should be left to me—and worked mostly near the house. A good many weeds had grown up where the garden had been, and I went at it mowing them down so that they wouldn't go to seed and make things bad for another year. There was no

getting the mowing-machine into the garden profitably, so I went back to the old way. You might hear almost any hour of daylight the sound of my whetstone against the steel. It made me think of old times.

There are three things which to me, as I dare say they are to many another man of my age who has been bred in the country, are among the losses. This is all nonsense I know, only the silly fancy of a man who has passed his prime and who loves the memory of some things he saw and heard, but a sense of these three things missing comes to me sometimes when I am in the fields. One feels the first only in the spring, when the snow has gone and the skies are blue and there is a drift of living things from southern countries. It is after the blue-birds and the robins have come but before the leaves are thick upon the trees. It is what was interesting once—I mean the flight of the wild pigeons. The sky was dark with them as they used to sweep northward in the spring. Why, I've seen them stretch out in all directions in a great thundering, flying army overhead, reaching so far in every way that you could not see the end, while the ground in the woods beneath was peopled by hosts of blue flocks of them which had dropped to

feed upon the mast which had lain beneath the beech and oak leaves throughout the winter. We slew and fed, and became elated over them and it was a wonderful season for all the people living in the country.

And now there are no pigeons. It seems they built their nests in groups of millions in some great forest, all together. And men, pot hunters who sell for the market, found those nests and slaughtered the birds, old and young together, and stopped all breeding and so the race of the wonderful thing of flight and of good for man has ended. What butchery there is in a new country! I have read often the story of how the same thing has happened to the big buffalo, out west. That may have been a murder on a grander scale, but to me it is not more sad. I look up into the blue sky in the springtime, and there is no swirling something to make my heart beat faster, and I hear no beating of swift wings. I look at the bare limbs of dead trees near the fields after the crops are gathered in the Fall and see them no longer burdened with the splendid birds, stopping with us for a week or two in their way to the south again. It is part of the old life gone.

And another thing that is, maybe, more foolish

still; hits me, though, perhaps, not quite as hard.

It is the loss of the ring of the whetstone against the scythe out in the field. The mowing machines have done away with all that music. I don't suppose it was music, according to what the teacher in the singing school would say, but it got to be mighty sweet to the ears of a man who had grown up in the country, with a heart in him. It was mixed up somehow, with the smell of the hay, and the June skies and the call of the meadow-lark and all that was sweet and wholesome and growing and good for him and for all the world. The whetstones rarely sing upon the scythes nowadays. A pottering old man, cutting the grass in the fence corners, or about the yard or in the orchard may handle the scythe occasionally and sharpen it in the old way, but the music is all gone. There is no swing to things. Strong men with brown arms are not racing across the field, laying their swaths together nor using their whetstones as they reach the bushes beside the fence when the field is crossed. It is only a foolish old man's notion, but I miss the sound as I miss the pigeons.

And the third thing is the thump of the flails upon the barn floor. The threshing machine has done away with that. As you pass along the road

in the fall or winter, you do not hear the steady "whack, whack," which tells that the grain is being pounded out, now sharp and clear, then duller again, as the flail comes down toward the head of the grain and close to the floor or nearer the hody of the sheaf. There was music in that old banging of the flails, and now you never hear it, unless, it may be where someone is threshing out a little buckwheat, a sort of crop the straw of which the machinery does not take to kindly, and which is not good for fodder.

And these are among the chief things I miss. Their absence makes the old man in the country lonesome, but we can't expect things to remain the same in a new country, and this appears to be a time when everything is changing, anyhow. I suppose the very fact that this is a new country has had much to do with what is like a revolution in the way of doing farm work. Men thrown upon themselves without the means they had become accustomed to in the old world must invent, perforce, and so the habit was bred in the new race we call Americans. They say it is much the same way with that other new race of English blood who have made Australia a great country. And man must not complain. Some old fellow in Aus-



tralia is grumbling, I dare say, to-day because the kangaroos are not as thick as they used to be, or that there are no more of those curious duck-billed creatures, half bird, half beast, they used to find along the streams. But Australia is not America, and our ways have changed more directly from those they had been in the wheat and grass fields of England from a time long before this country was discovered.

I have got away from my story, I know. A man past middle age is apt to ramble. Well, we did well enough for a time, and one day Jennison came over and found David and me in the barn, where we were in the horse stable knocking down a partition and making a double stall for a Morgan colt, of which David was very fond, and to which he wanted to give special attention the coming winter. Jennison came strolling in and spoke pleasantly, and finally said he was going away.

"I didn't like the job, anyhow," said he, "but the office got so many messages about you that it was finally concluded you must be doing something serious, and so I was sent on. I shall report the thing as it is. But, mind you, I may be sent back again, in time. The condition of things is an odd one, and somebody is at work to make it uncom-



fortable for you. If I come, of course, I must do my duty."

"It's all Vincent," said I.

"I don't know anything about that. It's none of my business. I tell you only what seems proper."

David thanked him and said he believed he understood things as they were, and Jennison went away. I tried to learn what Gaherty was about then, but I didn't succeed very well. I knew he was at Vincent's still, for I could see him occasionally on the front stoop or riding with Vincent into Magone and back again, but further than that he was watching us, I could learn nothing. It was Lucinda Briggs who made the first discovery of his ways.

Lucinda Briggs could never quite understand the tariff, much as we tried to make it clear to her. "Isn't this our farm?" she would say, "and isn't all that is upon it ours, and can't we move things about on our own ground as much as we want to? Sakes alive! I ain't going to let either of them two fellows stop me in my movings about or take away anything I carry. I won't stand it!"

Lucinda did, of course, whatever Alice told her but she did something Alice did not tell her to do, and, I may be wrong, but I imagine that blessed

Canadian did not make any special effort to note all Lucinda's goings and comings. There was an asparagus bed on the Mackenzie place and none on ours, yet we'd often had asparagus in summer after the load of hay was seized and we had been given warning, though, I never saw anybody bringing over the plants. And, after the farms were joined, the chickens, which were something of a nuisance about our barn, had been all taken over to the other place. When we settled down to observe the law after the officers came, part of the chickens were brought back, for we were great egg-eaters, but the fowls didn't stay with us a day. For some reason they liked the Mackenzie place better and the entire flock stayed and the hens had their nests there. Yet there were plenty of eggs on our table. Lucinda Briggs had done the egg-gathering in the past and no one asked her any questions now.

One night, about 9 o'clock, David and I were in the sitting-room just thinking of going to bed, when we were almost lifted from our chairs by a woman's scream which could have been heard a mile. It was the healthiest scream I ever listened to. There was not so much of terror in it as there was of dreadful earnestness. It seemed to come from right across the road. David jumped for the

door and ran out and I followed him in a moment with the lantern. The screams kept up as I ran across, and, mingled with them, was a rough man's voice swearing a blue streak. As I came up, I saw David dodging about a black heap which was tumbling about on the ground and I threw the light of the lantern on it. Then I sat down on the grass and roared, and David did the same thing. We couldn't help it. There, struggling together, were Lucinda Briggs and Gaherty, and such a sight I never saw before! They were smeared with the yolk and whites of dozens of eggs, from head to feet, and, as they rolled about, the mess got worse. They were a couple of the most shocking and ridiculous objects, I ever saw.

But Gaherty had a tight grip on Lucinda and she was trying to get away and we laughed but for a moment. David sprang at them and wrenched Gaherty away and stood the fellow on his feet. Lucinda getting up at the same time, and there we all were, looking at each other by the light of the lantern.

"Where is the line?" David asked me.

I looked and told him we were about six feet on the Canadian side. David turned to Gaherty:

"Look here," he said, "I'm on my own farm, in

Canada. You are a trespasser. If you don't get out of this in one minute, I'll give you such a thrashing that you won't sneak around any man's place again in six months!"

The man said, sullenly, that he thought he was on the American side and went slowly a few feet to the south. Then we turned our attention to Lucinda Briggs.

## CHAPTER IX.

### INTO SPRING AND BEYOND.

“Splash!”

The setting sun throws violet-colored darts  
Through the leafless branches where the forest parts,  
Shafts which fall richly through it and beyond  
Upon the darkening surface of the pond.  
See how the violet mingles with the black,  
As sudden ripples make a cobweb track;  
How opals slip in thousands to the shore,  
To touch its margin and appear no more;  
How from one spot eccentric circles glide,  
Each with its gem-load to the water's side!

“Splash!”

Almost there is an echo from the hill,  
But the soft sound falls short. Now all is still;  
A pickerel rose just then!

— *In Walton's Trail.*

Lucinda was very red in the face—red, at least, where she wasn't yellow. The inside of the eggs had not only spread itself over her dress, but it was in her hair and eyes and ears. She didn't say much as we started to lead her up to the house. As we crossed the road we were stopped for a moment

by Gaherty, who called out to us from only a few feet away:

"I made a mistake, but that is nothing, you'll learn yet! I'll get even with you! Don't forget that!"

We made no answer, but hurried Lucinda away toward the house and took her into the kitchen, and Alice and Mrs. Long came in and washed her face and ears and neck. And then, before anything more was done, we asked Lucinda to tell her story. It did us good.

"I may as well own up the whole thing," blubbered out the girl, half laughing and half crying; "I've been getting the eggs all along—of course you have known that, all of you—you don't 'spose I was going to let them fellows stop it? An' the way I done it was to wait a day or two, until I got a batch of three or four dozen, an' go over 'bout this time o' night an' bring 'em. I knew where the nests was, an' it was only feeling round to get the eggs. Wa'al, to-night I got a big lot; there was near four dozen, an' I lifted up the ends of my apron an' tied 'em round back of my neck, an' that made a big bag, an' I put 'em all in there an' started down here, walking very steady, coz I was afraid the eggs would spill. An' jest as I got to

the ditch, before you cross the road, somebody grabbed me. I was scared an' I hollered, but I fit. An' we rastled an' we both went down in a heap, an' he was on top an' he busted all the eggs an' they run over me, an' then I squirmed and heaved 'im an' got on top my self, and the eggs run over him, too; an' I really believe I'd licked 'im in the end. An' then you come. An' it was that man Gaherty, an' I'd like to kill 'im!"

We laughed until we were tired. To see Lucinda, excited as she was, and smeared all over with egg, standing and waving her arms and telling of her "rastle" with Gaherty, was the funniest thing in the world. She was mad, clear through.

We expected that something would happen in the morning; that Lucinda Briggs would be arrested, or something of that sort, but nothing took place out of the common. It was plain that Gaherty felt he had, in his eagerness, seized upon Lucinda a trifle too soon, and that he had no case against her. And a day or so later we heard that he had left. I learned in Magone that this was really the case, and we all breathed a little more easily. The man had been a sort of nightmare to us, though we had tried to observe the laws most

carefully—barring Lucinda Briggs. But about her we men hadn't known; we'd only guessed.

And nothing more was heard, for the time, of either Gaherty or Jennison, though I, myself, never felt quite at ease. I had a kind of feeling that, at some time, Gaherty would come back, and come in earnest. I could not forget the vicious look on his face as I last saw him standing there, all egg-be-smearred, in the light of the lantern. Such a man as he wouldn't wear for a moment such a look as that and nothing ever come of it; of this I felt certain. But I said nothing about it to David or the rest of the family. What was the use of giving to them my gloomy fancies? And after a while I almost forgot them myself.

So, we drifted along toward spring. It was not a bad winter for us. The crops had been good, though we lost something through not being able to bring to our own market those raised on the Canadian side. We had sold early, else the case might have been a little different. I'm afraid some of the crops might have gone the other way if the officers had left sooner. We had no idea of doing any smuggling, but it did seem a little hard that we could not drive as we wished, or move the stock or tools about on our own place and, after awhile,



we got a little careless. And March came at last, and the snow began to melt away and it was almost spring. Then something happened which set me thinking about John Cross again.

The snow had all gone and the ground was bare and black, and one afternoon, came a steady, drizzling rain, which lasted far into the night. Then, suddenly, it turned cold and in the house we lay snug under the quilts and coverlets. The morning broke clear as could be and the sun came out on one of those scenes you look upon only once in every four or five years. The rain had frozen as it fell on everything and every tree, every branch and every twig was a glittering thing in silver, hanging down with the weight of it. The orchard was one great blaze of glory but all looked strange and unnatural. The world of the day before was gone and a new one had come in its stead. The branches all hung so near the ground that the features of the place were changed and everything seemed in a way unreal. It was like what I had read of in some fairy story, with all the barbaric lightness and grace and splendor of the thing. I went out through the orchard for a short cut to the road over a place where the fence was down, and, half way through, I met John Cross on his way to

our house on some errand. I started as I saw him, for I hadn't noticed how changed he was, even from the man I have described already. He looked bad enough, certainly, at the time when I took dinner with him, but now he looked far worse. It may have been the brightness of everything around that brought out the manner of his face more clearly, for we stood beneath an archway blazing with white light, but, whatever the reason, his looks brought me to a standstill in a moment. "What's the matter with you, John?" I asked him.

"Nothing in particular, only I've got that flatiron in here all the time," he said, pressing his hand against his stomach as he spoke.

"Dyspepsia as bad as ever?"

"About the same. There's a weight in here."

"What are you doing for it?"

"Oh, the old woman has got some wild cherry bark and whiskey and I take that. Guess I'll be all right by and by. But this flatiron makes me miserable. I have odd fancies sometimes."

I laughed, thinking to improve his spirits. "You'll be all right if you eat less fried pork and a greater variety of things and breathe in all you can of pure air. You must brace up, you know; maybe you'll have to lick Gaherty sometime. I feel confident the fellow is coming back again."

Then, in a moment, I wished I hadn't spoken of Gaherty, for when I mentioned his name John Cross started as if it were summer and a massasauga had rattled in the grass, and there came into his eyes a gleam I didn't like. "What's that you say?" he almost screamed out.

"Nothing, John," I answered, "nothing at all. I only said I thought Gaherty would be back by and by and that we might have trouble with him."

The man leaped up and down without any reason. "Let him come!" he shouted. "Let him come! I'll attend to him! Don't you forget that, Jason. He's been the ruin of us or, if he hasn't, he's goin' to be. He's got a bad eye. I saw it when he first came here. But I'll attend to him! Don't you forget that!"

I said that maybe I was mistaken and that, considering all things, it was likely we should never see the man again, but John Cross was not satisfied. I talked about other things and tried to get his mind away from Gaherty but I wasn't over successful. John would stick to that subject, and I wondered as I looked at him and heard his rambling talk. He had grown much thinner and more gaunt than he had been the summer before and his face had become so yellow all over that the

brown moth spots on his forehead could hardly be distinguished. He glanced sideways out of his eyes and would start at any unexpected sound. He was not a pleasant thing to look at. We did not talk of Gaherty again for many a day.

The spring was good, a season I shall not forget, with all its pleasantness, this year of which I am telling. There was not a little rain and the creek was full and overflowed the flats and the pickerel came up and the splash of their rising could be seen at sunset all over what looked almost like a lake. We speared a number of them, and very good eating they made. And the drying off was rapid and there was no trouble about getting in the early crops.

Spring drifted along into summer and new plans were made and the crops put in were growing well and it was a comfortable household of which David was the head. There was but one thing out of the regular order. Our Alice did not attend to her usual household duties now and was rarely with us at meal times and there came an air of anxiety to David. When there was anything to be got at Magone he no longer made the trip, but sent me instead and he was never far from the house at any time. And, finally, one day he drove across the

country to bring old Mrs. Shannon to our place. The substance of it all was that what husbands and wives who love each other wish was about to come to David and Alice and due preparation had to be made for the great event. In the country, a doctor is rarely brought from town at such times as this, but there is always some old lady, of the neighborhood, some self-contained and motherly old creature, who is relied upon and whose services are always freely given. In our immediate region Mrs. Shannon was the pillar of strength. She came to the house and was looked upon, for the time being, as one of the family. And then happened something odd.

Old man Mackenzie, who was in particularly good shape this summer, was, of course, all interest, and one day he proposed to David that Alice should, for a few weeks, take up her abode in a wing of the old homestead, a part which the Cross family rarely used, and which could be easily furnished up for her. "It's the room in which she was born," said the old man, "and I've an idea she'd like it."

The proposition was so queer that David was startled at first, and then he burst out laughing: "I see what you're at," he shouted. "Oh, but

you're crafty! You want a little Canadian."

Old men are not supposed to blush, I believe, but old man Mackenzie came as near to it as he could just then. He said nothing at first, but in a moment or two hobbled off, grumbling out that anyhow it wouldn't be a bad thing for the child. Mackenzie was nothing if he wasn't patriotic. And David, as a second thought came to him, ran after the old man and told him that, whichever side of the line the child was born, it would have a good grandfather, anyhow. This was good, as far as it went, and mollified the old man somewhat, but I could see that he wasn't quite satisfied. He'd have given a good deal to have had us living in the other house. But that was out of the question, and he made the best of it. There was a good deal of philosophy in old man Mackenzie.

## CHAPTER X.

### GEMINI.

The sunbeams flit o'er floor and wall  
And caper on the ceiling,  
And sober sunbeams are they all,  
Not one of them is reeling.  
They're skirmishing a cradle 'round,  
About and in and under,  
And something very fair they've found—  
But they are lost in wonder.  
They swirl about and in and out  
And each is full of trouble;  
There all amazed and all in doubt,  
For all of them see double!

—*Lyrics of the Zodiac.*

It was full mid-summer now and the elderberry blossoms no longer hung in snowy slabs along the fences. The flowers had loosened and fallen from the blackberry bushes and made a sweet-smelling carpet for the chipmunks down below. There was just the slightest touch of brown to the pinkness of the clover heads, and the bobolinks were getting sober. They no longer pitched, quivering

in their odd way with song, from shrub to fence, and from fence to the grassy furrows, but were becoming more sedate. The yellow-white upon their necks was changing to a brown and only an occasional bird of them was foolish. Here and there such a hardened one would forget his growing family and business and sing boisterously. He didn't seem to know that very soon he would be a portly little reed bird, to be slain by a pot-hunter some fine morning when gorging himself along the marshes which lie just east of the Long Bridge over which came the hurrying thousands after the first battle of Bull Run. He didn't seem to quite grasp the fact that he would be eaten then at a restaurant in Washington, and paid for by some foolish congressman, looking into the eyes of an adventuress across the table. This, I judge from what I've read in the newspapers, is what often happens to a bobolink. The red-winged blackbirds were in their glory now along the creek and held town meetings. The wild flag was turning out its three-cornered pod. The pond lilies were wide open and their broad leaves over-lapped each other so stiffly that the frogs sat on them. It was a shrewd mink wandering along the bank that could get a frog loafing out there on the lily pads.



The mink couldn't steal upon him quietly enough through such surroundings and the frog had time abundant for a header. A devil's darning-needle perched on every bullrush and there were big black butterflies, wonderfully marked with scarlet and gold, fluttering about among the late flowers, a sort of butterfly one does not see much of earlier in the season. It was the half-lazy few days which come just after the toil of the haying season is over and before harvesting begins. There is hardly time enough to draw a long breath as they say, but in the country we make the most of it.

And one afternoon of just such a day as I have tried to give an idea of, I was down in what we called the east field, looking to see if there was water enough in a little pool we had dug by a spring there for three or four calves we were keeping on that part of the place. I'd not been there long and was trying with a hoe to improve somewhat the little channel from the spring to the pool when I heard David calling. I went back to the house and he met me at the gateway:

"You must look after everything outside, this afternoon, Jason," he said. "I don't want to leave Alice," and he strode up the path and went into that part of the house which he and Alice had taken for their own.

It was a "wing" room and, like so many such rooms in the country, was originally a house by itself, the small frame structure put up in the days when the pioneer had little money to build with. It was in it that David was born. Later, when the big house had been built, the partitions had been taken out of the old one and it had been turned around and attached to the new structure as a wing, making a big, comfortable room open to the country on three sides. There were rose-bushes about it, and a little piazza on one side and vines ran all over it. It was a pleasant place but it was not as new and strong as the main part of the house, and David had been talking with me about putting on a new roof. It was rain-proof yet, but the old moss-covered shingles were so brittle one could almost crumble them with the grasp of his fingers.

There was an anxious look on David's face when he left me, for which I didn't blame him, and I resolved that he should have nothing to worry him about the farm until there was nothing on his mind. I started toward the barn, and on the way there it struck me, somehow, that everything was stiller than usual. There had been that feeling in the air which tells of coming rain, and there had been

all the other usual signs. The bluejays had been calling querulously, and the tree-toads, in a beech which had been left standing near the house, were making a good deal of noise. Now the tree-toads and jays were still, and I could see a crow or two flying over the field toward the wood, but making never a sound. It struck me oddly, and I turned and went back to the house, where an open space in the yard behind gave me a clear view in all directions.

There was not breeze enough now to lift the leaves upon the apple trees. The chickens—we had got a few back to the place—usually seen under the currant bushes at this hour of the day, were no longer there, but I saw a laggard pullet hurrying under the barn, where I knew the rest of them must be. I looked westward across the road and over Vincent's cornfield, and there was no flutter to a single blade, nor tremor to the tassels at the top of the stalks—and the tassel at the top of a growing cornstalk will move at the slightest breath. The air seemed thin, too. I drew a long breath, getting into my lungs all they would hold, but there wasn't any feeling of satisfaction in it. There was a kind of lack of life. I looked at the wing. Mrs. Shannon came out upon the little piazza and David

followed her, and they both went inside again, but before they did so I saw David look up at the sky and all around in a kind of wonder. He felt the strangeness of it, as I did ; I could see that. Then I looked away to the west and saw something curious.

Far off, just above that dark band which marks the wood in the country, the sky had a look I had rarely seen before. Low down was a sort of greenish-yellow hue, which rose above the distant woodland a little and extended north and south along about a quarter of the whole horizon. There was something which reminded one of sulphur about the color. The space covered by this hue was not very high, but seemed rising gradually. And right in the very center of it was a great bunch of snowy wool.

The wool was growing faster than its field of yellow-green. It kept rolling up from behind and mounting higher and higher all the time until it was a great, white pillar, broadest at the top, reaching, it seemed to me, a mile upward in the heavens. I had seen coming storms before, but never one like this, and I could not keep my eyes from the thing. I forgot where I was and all that was close about me. I could only see that dreadful climbing mountain of wool.

By and by the huge pillar was so high that its top seemed to lean over almost right above me, and the yellow-green at its base was getting darker each moment, and, all at once, from away off over the wood, two or three flashes of lighting spat out in quick succession. I could hear no thunder. It was too far off for that yet; but another sort of wool, blacker than any from the blackest sheep that was ever sheared, came rolling up now from around the base of the white wool mountain, and I knew that an awful storm, maybe a cyclone, was close at hand. But above and all about near us the sky was clear and blue, and everything was as usual, save for the scaring stillness. Now the white wool seemed to spread out, and the black came rushing up in a cloud, which hung low down in the middle, and the lightning blazed all the time. But there was no rain yet, nor could I hear a sound. And, just then—just as the stillness seemed most solemn because of the vast movements the eye could see—there came to my ear a single cry, not loud nor very strong, but distinct enough. I understood what it was; there is no other sound just like it, and I had heard it once before in my life—it was the cry of a new-born babe.

The air became cold in a moment and, in a

second as it seemed the sun was shut off, and it was almost darkness, and, a few seconds later, the leaves on the trees tossed a little in a fitful way, and there was silence no longer. The storm was upon us. There was the screaming of a mighty wind and the trees bent down before it, and a few drops of rain fell. It seemed as if a hurricane was to follow, and I feared for everything. Then there was a little pause once more, and then almost blackness came, and there was a roar, and the storm was upon us at its worst.

I hugged a great oak post with arms mortised through it, where we hung up the hogs at killing time, and clung there. There was that roar all about me, and a cloud of dead leaves and twigs swept against me and stung me. I could hear the tearing of wood as limbs gave way in the orchard, and I thought of the house and was more frightened. I had reason to be. There came a tremendous crash and rending, and I saw the roof of the wing, in which lived David and Alice, lifted up and crumpled like paper, in its age and weakness, and swept all away in a moment. There was another great gust, and then within a second or two it seemed the worst was over, so far as the wind storm went, and the inky blackness lessened a little,

though it was dark yet, and the rain began to come down in scattering drops.

I rushed into the house and through to the wing. It was wonderful! The whole roof was gone and the room was open to the sky, but Alice lay there in the bed quietly enough, and Mrs. Shannon sat near her, with a little thing, wrapped up in something, in her arms. David was leaning anxiously over his wife, his mother at his side, and old Mr. Mackenzie stood, staring, near the door. In the doorway, so that I had to push her aside as I broke in, was Lucinda Briggs. Strangely enough, they did not seem terrorized at all. They were simply dazed, by what had happened, and hadn't moved yet! I think I had the most sense of anyone just then. I jumped at David and caught him by the arm and yelled out: "Quick! We must get Alice out of this!" and he roused in a moment. Everybody seemed to waken. David leaned over and took hold of the mattress from beneath at the head and I did the same thing at the foot, and we lifted all together and carried the dear girl so into the next room. But there was no other room fitted for her in the house. Then out broke old Mackenzie with his idea, which had, at last, become a good one:



"Take her across the way!" he cried; "it's hardly raining yet. Carry her gently across the way to the wing in her old home—to her own, old room! She'll be best there! Hurry, lads! carry her gently!"

And we did it. We were across the road in a moment, carrying her as gently as ever woman was carried yet, and five minutes later she was in her own, old room, and Mrs. Shannon had brought over the wee living thing she had been holding, and there was a good roof over all, and every comfort.

The rain had begun to fall smartly now, but it did not last for long. It seldom does rain much after a great summer windstorm such as had come upon us. The drops ceased falling and the sun came out again and in the yard and all about the fields there was a greater clamor of living things than there had been before in all the day. Everything seemed rejoicing that all had ended so well and I am sure that I myself was as glad as the cackling chickens in the yard or the thrush that was making music from an elm off in the field. I was happy that the crisis for her we loved so was over, and happier still that the great danger which had made my heart stop beating for a time had passed her and those with her. I had returned



to our own house and helped take the things out of the wrecked room and, coming out into the front yard, saw something among a clump of bushes on the Canadian side of the road which attracted me. There is all through this northern belt of country, a bird, about as big as a catbird, colored the most brilliant red, with black wings, which, though very shy, often comes out of the dense woods into the fields just after a summer rain. There is some sort of insect it likes which it seems to find abundant then. I've looked in the books and found that this brilliant thing is called: a "scarlet tanager," though I don't suppose one country boy in a hundred knows it. They call the beautiful object a red bird and it is not so common but that it always draws attention and makes us watch while it is in sight. One of these birds was in the clump of bushes and I was admiring it when I heard from the vicinity of the Cross place the most tremendous whoop! I looked up and saw that David had left the house and was coming over to our own place—he was already close to me—while, just rushing out of the house, bareheaded and leaping about as if he'd never been lame a day in his life, was old man Mackenzie! He was running toward us, still whooping, and I didn't know but he had suddenly

gone mad. David turned round a little alarmed, too, I think, as Mackenzie dashed down upon us.

"Praise the Lord!" the old man shouted. "D'ye hear, mon? Praise the Lord! Hooray! Eh, but it's a glorious day!"

And he capered about more wildly than ever. The happy look on David's face gave way to one of perplexity. "Yes," he said, "it's a great day, of course, but aren't you a little excited over it, father?"

"Excited?" roared the old man. "Who wouldn't be? It's a Canadian, too! D'ye hear me, mon, it's a Canadian!"

"Do you mean the baby?" asked David. "I don't see how that can be. It was born on this side of the line."

The old man stared blankly for a moment, then roared again: "Hooray! Eh, but it's a great hour! Must I bring the news to it's own father? Why, mon, there's another! D'ye mind me, another!" And he capered about again, like the old lunatic he was.

And David was off to the house like a shot. As for me, I'm afraid I whooped a little, too, but as I've said I always liked old Mackenzie. And then it occurred to me that there was work to be done and I hurried off toward our own barn.

As I started I looked down the road and saw at a distance a buggy coming in which were two men. One, I could see, was Vincent, the other I thought I recognized.

## CHAPTER XI.

### MATTERS BECOME COMPLICATED.

One little egg had two brown flecks,  
And one little egg had three,  
And, O, the eggs in the chickadee's nest  
Were charming things to see!  
And the mother bird was as proud a bird  
As any bird could be.  
"I'll call one One, and one Palimpsest;  
Yes I will said, the chickadee.  
The little ones throve uncommonly well,  
And nothing at all went ill,  
And each little bird pecked a hole in his shell  
With a persevering bill.  
One pecked away at the two brown specks  
And the other at three; 'twas done!  
And the chickadee doubts as to Palimpsests  
And she doesn't know which is One

—*Down Among The Bushes.*

Something like a lump came in my throat as I looked, for I felt, as I took the first glance, that there, nearing us every moment, was the man I most dreaded to see and about whom I had a sort of what they call premonition. I could see the

two men but indistinctly, they were so far away when I first looked, but I just knew, in some way, that one of them was Gaherty. And I was right. It was Vincent's buckboard which was coming down the road and as it got nearer I saw plainly enough that the two men in it were Vincent and the officer. As they went by Gaherty looked squarely at me and there was a grin upon his face, something as much as to say: "Well, my boy, I said you'd hear from me again, and here I am!" Vincent himself looked pleased, too, as far as his peaked face could show any feeling.

I went up toward the Mackenzie house with a little load on my mind and met David at the doorway. I told him what I had seen and, though he was sober-faced for a moment, it didn't last. He was too full of happiness to be reasonable. "What does it matter, old man?" he half shouted as he grasped my hand; "we'll get through with all these customs troubles somehow—and, man, it *is* twins! There are two boys in the room with their mother there! Think of that! I'm the father of a pair of baby boys! They belong to Alice and me! What do I care for customs or customs officers or all that may come of them!" And the radiance on the big young fellow's face did me a world of good.

I laughed to myself, as I went out, at the young father's enthusiasm but I laughed too soon. I should have waited for a week or two until, as, they say, I had sized up my own self better. I never expected to become silly or unreasoning over a baby or over a pair of babies, but then these were not babies of the ordinary kind, at least so it seemed to all of us as we became acquainted with them. There had been fine babies before, I suppose, at least I had heard people speak of them, but it seems to me that there could never have been any quite equal to this sturdy young American and his brother, the Canadian. The young pigs made themselves perfectly at home from the first and were rulers of the whole place before they were forty-eighty hours old. They were such sturdy little villains, and so hungry, and bawled or fed with such earnestness that one couldn't help falling in love with them for their very recklessness. And something dreadful happened which made the couple all the more interesting. The elder of the babies, the one born on the American side, had a little blue ribbon tied about its wrist by Mrs. Shannon the nurse, and, though without that you could no more have told them apart than you could have done two peas, yet marked so, we com-

pared them often, for the first day or two, and there was a lot of nonsense between David and his father-in-law as to the merits of the two, old man Mackenzie insisting that the Canadian had a trifle the better legs.

It went on that way until Lucinda Briggs, who worshiped the youngsters, was told, one afternoon, to bring a new ribbon for the American's wrist, the one first put on having become soiled from the young gentleman's feeble efforts to swallow his hand. She went off in her plunging way, but just before she started must needs strip off the ribbon on the baby's wrist, with some idea, I suppose that she would so save time. She came rushing back with the fresh ribbon five minutes later, when, lo and behold the American baby was not where she had left him! Mrs. Shannon had them both together—the two babies, I mean—and was engaged in some arrangement of bandages, and to save her life she couldn't tell which was which! She had paid no attention to the thing, for she hadn't noticed that Lucinda Briggs had taken off the ribbon—and there we were! No one could tell which of those children was born on the Canadian or which on the American side and no one knows to this day. Old Mackenzie was much cut up

about it, but I think David was rather glad. "They haven't been named yet," he said to his father-in-law, "and pretty soon we shall be able to tell them apart, anyhow, and it's just as well, I guess, that we don't really know which was born first. It may save jealousy sometime, and it leaves a pleasant thing to guess at. It isn't as if it were in England, where the oldest son would have the advantage."

But old man Mackenzie still grumbled a little and said it was a shame. Lucinda Briggs was almost heart-broken over what she had done, at first, but was bright enough after she had confessed to her mistress. The dear woman in the bed was actually radiant when she heard of it. "I'm very, very glad of it," she said; "it is better that way." And we all agreed it was so for never was there a queen who ruled a people more surely than did our Alice all of us.

But even a pair of lusty American-Canadian twins cannot be all there is in the world, for any great length of time, and before those young people were a week old David began to get a little sense again, and could muster up enough reason to listen to me when I got a chance to talk to him of the probable trouble near at hand. Then he talked



with a man who made him think in earnest. Jennison came again.

The Canadian broke in upon us in his breezy style, coming up to the house just as if he thought we would be glad to see him, and congratulated David on the twins. He said he didn't have any children of his own, which was rather a disgrace when they so needed more population in Canada, but that he liked babies, and always rather envied the owner of one. When a man had two on his hands—well, he was in great luck, that was all. And he looked as if he meant what he said.

His first talk over, Jennison became quite another sort of man, but I'll give him credit for coming to the point fairly and decently: "I didn't like the trip back here," he explained, "but I had to come. It's bread and butter, I put it to you as it is, so that you'll know what you have to look out for. Vincent or Gaherty, or Vincent and Gaherty, one or both of them—I don't know, and it doesn't make any difference—or some one else, has been stirring things up again, and reporting you as violating the law right along. So Gaherty has been sent here and you'll be watched pretty closely, for yours is to be made a sort of test case, and I have been sent here just to hold up the

Canadian end. The reports came to us, I think, the same as they did to the American authorities. And all I have to say is, as I said before, that I'll do my duty. I must do that, and you must be careful. Of course I'll have little to look out for, compared with Gaherty, for what any man on the line wants, nine times in ten, is not to get something into Canada, but to get something out of Canada. You know that as well as I do. But please don't try to get anything dutiable in, else I shall have to come down on you."

We both recognized the man's fairness and good-heartedness, as we had done before, and we told him so. He went away whistling and contented with himself, and took up his abode again at the Latimer place. Each morning he would come out and walk down to the crossing and stroll up in front of our place and down to the road, and, I dare say, he kept up a pretty bright look-out during the day, but that was all we saw of him. He acted, in a general way, just as he did the first time he came. It wasn't that way with Gaherty.

The very first day Gaherty had settled down again at Vincent's he came "snoopin'", as Lucinda Briggs called it, all about the place. He wandered up and down the road and peered over the fences,

and seemed to be troubled only because he couldn't actually come upon the farm, either on the American or the Canadian side, and follow us about all the time and see just what we were doing. If we went to work in any particular field we wouldn't be there half an hour before we could see the man standing up against the fence on the side of the road nearest us and pretending to read a newspaper, or something of that sort, though it was needless and silly, for we knew what he was there for, and he knew that we knew. He made me almost nervous with having him constantly in sight, and I could see that it gritted David a little. As for John Cross, he said never a word. He was becoming more silent and more yellow-looking than ever now, and I feared that he would soon be sick abed. He did his work, though, just as well as ever, as far as I could see, and because he said nothing about Gaherty I hoped he had got over his rage against that evil-faced nuisance, and wouldn't run against him if he could help it. He would stop work sometimes for a moment and look across the field to the fence just beyond which Gaherty was making himself comfortable, but after looking he would only apply himself to his work again and say nothing. "The man is getting sense,"

I would think to myself. I didn't know as much then about some things as I was compelled to learn afterward.

So things drifted along for three or four weeks, and nothing happened of any importance. We were not disturbed by either of the customs officers, because, as a matter-of-fact, we did nothing which would give them a chance. The grain had about all been stored, since most of it had been raised on the American side, and the threshing began and was finished without interference from anybody. The twins grew as I don't believe babies ever grew before, and were sweet and fat and clamorous in their big cradle, and their dear mother was out ruling her household again, and thinking of David and for the comfort of everybody, as usual. Of course we didn't see quite as much of her as we once did, for the twins were extraordinarily fond of her, too, and would make things lively if she staid away too long. She had David's mother, though, and Mrs. Shannon still staid with us—David insisted on that—and so, except that there were more people of importance in the house, matters stood just as they had done in early summer, but I knew it couldn't last.

There were things on the Canadian side we

needed over with us, and we couldn't always get the cattle to drift over accidentally when we needed them. Besides, the fowls were nearly all on the wrong side again, and that worried Lucinda Briggs. There were hardly eggs enough found on our territory to make cakes with. We hadn't eaten any eggs for a month after Alice was brought back to her own home in David's house—the wing had been repaired and put in prettier shape than ever—until one day we all went over, the whole household of us, to John Cross' place, carrying the twins along, and there had a great dinner, got up by Alice and Mrs. Long, of eggs and such things as were on that farm and not on our own. It was after we had come back that same day that Lucinda had a talk with me.

"How long's this thing goin' to last?" said Lucinda.

"How long is what going to last?"

"I mean how long is it goin' to be 'fore I can git eggs again. I'm afeared to do it at night any more, for I know that man's watchin' for me, but we've got to have 'em. Jason, ain't there some way you can help? You're counted a smart man 'bout things on a farm. Tell me how I'm goin' to git them eggs?"

I thought a good deal over what Lucinda Briggs said to me, and the next day I told her I was going to try to help her out, at least about the eggs. I thought I knew a way. I told her about it, and the girl was tickled amazingly over the plan. And then I went to work.

## CHAPTER XII.

### JASON'S HENS' NESTS.

"Cackle, cackle. cackle!" Then

This you may decide on,

There's an egg; if it's a hen;

She can be relied on.

"Cackle, cackle!" Some one's done

Something worth the telling,

And the boasting has begun.

Hear the cackle swelling!

"Cackle!" Is it worth it? No;

And it's past believing,

Even now, that cackling so

Often is deceiving!

—*Signs of the Times.*

I thought the matter over carefully. The chickens and the guinea-hens and turkeys, even the ducks, were all on the Mackenzie farm, and liked to stay there best. By feeding them about our own place in the winter, we had got them to stay about the American side for a time, but as soon as spring came they were off to their old haunts again, and made their nests where they had them the summer

before. Even the chickens we owned before David and Alice were married had gone with the lot, and in our own barn, or anywhere about the place, one couldn't find a hen's nest. The fowls of all sorts would run over both farms in their feeding—one of their favorite scratching-places was among our own currant-bushes, where you could see half a dozen hens lying and wallowing in the dry soil any afternoon—but they laid their eggs in the Mackenzie barn or sheds, and raised their young broods there. There wasn't a manger over there or a promising nook of the hay-mow that hadn't a nest in it. The problem now was to get all the fresh eggs on our side.

That part of the garden where the rows of currant-bushes were, and which the hens so much liked to visit, was just northwest of the house and close to the road on the line. Right across from this, John Cross had raised a lot of tomatoes in a corner of the field, and this locality the hens thought well of, too. They would come down from the Mackenzie barn in the morning and invade the patch, and be all over it a good deal of the day. I suppose they found plenty of bugs there, and I know that they pecked away at the red tomatoes, too, occasionally. So at these corners of the



two places there were to be found a lot of hens most of the time. I made up my mind to operate in this locality.

I'm something of a carpenter, and I got a lot of boards and went to work making boxes. I made twenty or thirty of them, and this was their style: Every box had a top which reached out over the edges a little to keep out the wet, and in the side of each, close to the bottom, was a hole about eight inches square. On the bottom of each one I put a lot of hay, and hollowed it out and smoothed it in the center until it looked like a pretty good hen's nest. These boxes I set in a row near the currant-bushes, and then all about them I scattered chaff and hay and straw thickly, and put a little grain about, too, so that the whole thing would seem kind o' barn-like, or shed-like, and natural to the hens. Then I put into the hollow in the hay of every box one egg—a nest-egg, as they call it in the country. These Lucinda Briggs got from a neighbor beyond Vincent's place. There were as fine a lot of hen's nests as could be found in the country, and Lucinda Briggs and I waited for what would happen. So did Gaherty. He had been watching the whole performance and knew just what I was trying to do as well as I but he didn't say anything.

He couldn't. We were doing a little carpenter work on our own ground. If certain Canadian hens came visiting, who could help it?

But the hens didn't come. That was the mean part of it. They would visit the currant-bushes as usual, and roll about in the sand, and would scratch among the hay and straw I had left about the nests and eat the grain they found there, and the inquisitive ones among them would peer into the nests, and some of them would even step inside and come out again, looking surprised; but never an egg could we find in those same nests. The yard was a good enough place to visit and scratch in, but you could see that the hens didn't think of it in any other way. The Mackenzie barn and sheds were good enough for them for all business purposes.

Gaherty could see that the thing didn't work, and chuckled openly. Then I got mad. I'd started out to do a thing and I didn't like to be beaten. Lucinda Briggs was almost heart-broken over the failure, and I felt that my reputation was suffering a little. I thought over the case for days, and concluded to try a new dodge on those hens.

I told John Cross of what I was going to try and that I wanted him to help me. I wanted his

youngsters to help me, too. I went over to the Mackenzie place one morning, and we all went out to the barn, and when we had got through with our demonstration there wasn't a fowl of any sort in that barn nor in any shed about the place. Furthermore, there wasn't a chance left for anything the size of a hen to get into again. We closed every door and we nailed slats across every open window. The only place left open which they could visit was a big, open wagon-shed where there were a lot of perches, to which the turkeys had taken a fancy. And John Cross was told not to allow the barn or shed doors to stay open at all, and the children were told to drive away any chickens they saw about the barn or sheds at any time. Our barn-doors were left open, and then Lucinda Briggs and I got interested again.

I could hear a racket from the Mackenzie place all the rest of the day, after we had closed the doors as I have told. There would be a squalling and cackling, and I could hear the shouting of the children. The job the tow-headed young reprobates had been given just suited them. No danger that they would neglect a chance to chase chickens! That afternoon the yard about the currant-bushes was crowded with hens, and, after supper, I told

Lucinda we'd go out and see about things. And something had happened. In two of the nests we found an extra egg.

Lucinda Briggs got excited. "I knew we'd git 'em!" she said, "I knew it! And we've got that man Gaherty, too! He'll die! he'll just die when he sees what the hens are doing!" And she danced around among the bushes until I was afraid she'd fall over the boxes, or do something ridiculous. She was as bad as a cow in the garden.

Well, we concluded to leave the eggs in the nest, just as a sort of encouragement to those two hens, whichever they were, and I made Lucinda promise she wouldn't go near the bushes in the day-time for a day or two. She went out in the night, though, and said there were eggs in a dozen of the nests, at least, and the next day I had stumbled upon one nest in our own barn. There was no rest for the hens except in the fields or among the currant-bushes or in our own barns, and within a week they had practically changed their abode, for all family purposes. I went out to the garden just after dinner one day to have a good look at them, and called Lucinda Briggs, as usual. In that enterprise she was partner with me, in a way, and I liked to enjoy it with her in company.

There were only a few hens visible, when we first went out, but there were a great lot of them working their way down through John Cross' tomato patch on the other side, and as they got close to the fence they suddenly took the fancy all together, as hens will, and came rushing across the road in a flock, with heads stretched out and much clucking and chattering and self-congratulation. They came in among the bushes, and some of them fell to scratching and digging about, and by, and by, a whole lot slipped quietly into the nests. A little later, there stepped out of one of the boxes a pullet, buff colored with white flecks and with a first-class voice, and began cackling violently and telling all the world that there was a fresh egg inside. "That's a great pullet," said Lucinda; "She lays kind o' yellow eggs. They ain't very big, but she's reg'lar."

We stood there looking and chuckling to ourselves over how smart we were, when I noticed another lot of chickens drifting down through the field and across the road. They started to run over in a bunch, just as the others had done, when there fell among them suddenly a big lump of hard clay, and they flew off, squalling, every way. The thing astonished me. I looked up and down but couldn't see anybody. Yet I had never known lumps of clay to fall out of the sky.

I went up nearer the road and looked again. Not far from where I was standing and close to the fence was a big clump of elderberry bushes. and looking out of those bushes, I could see, plainly enough now, the face of Gaherty. He saw me at the same time and, brazen as he was generally, seemed, I thought, a trifle confused. I climbed the fence and went along to where he stood. As I came up he stepped out into the roadway.

"Don't you think you're in rather small business?" I said.

"What do you mean?" he answered.

"I mean that you threw a lump of clay at that lot of hens just now. What did you do it for? They're not your hens. They belong to David Long, and I work for him. It doesn't matter whether it is a hen or a horse, I'm bound to take care of his property. And I want to tell you, right here, that, even if you are a government officer, you'd better be a little careful! You can't go outside your duty, not an inch, round here! I tell you that. What were you throwing at the hens for?"

He grumbled out something about there being no harm in a man's throwing a lump of clay at a lot of hens, for fun, as long as he didn't hurt any

of them. "You're a tricky lot, anyway," he wound up with.

Then I got mad. I told him he was about as big a sneak and about as mean-spirited and malicious as any man I ever saw and that I didn't think it would be at all out of the way if I gave him a reasonably good thrashing, there and then. I was older than he was but I thought I could do it easily enough. And just as I said that I heard someone behind me yell, "Hooray!"

I looked around and there sat Lucinda Briggs, as large as life, on the top rail of the fence. She had climbed up there to hear and see all that passed, and was getting earnest. Her face was fairly beaming.

"Lick him, Jason!" she said.

That ridiculous picture rather helped to bring me to reason. I didn't want to get into any difficulty with the man unless it was absolutely necessary. He was evil-disposed enough naturally and there was no use in doing anything to make him worse.

I cooled off a little.

"You were only mad," I said, "because the hens have taken to laying on this side and we can use our own eggs without having to pay five cents a dozen duty on them. It grits you to see decent



people getting along in a decent way and it grits you to lose a chance to make trouble. That's just how it stands. Now I want to tell you this. I don't suppose we can stop you from hanging around here and annoying us by prying into everything, and I don't suppose you'll show any mercy if you get some charge that will stick against us. I do suppose, though, that you've got to keep within your rights. If ever I see you again doing anything to interfere with us, even if it's no more than throwing a clod at a chicken, I'll lick you within an inch of your life; at least I'll try to lick you."

The man showed his temper then, and an ugly temper it was: "Its lucky for you, old man," he snarled, "that you didn't forget yourself and dare to make an assault on me. You wouldn't have had much of a fight; you'd have only got some of this."

He lifted his hand, which had been resting in the side pocket of his loose coat, and in it was a big revolver. That made me angrier than ever, but there was nothing more to that encounter. I told the man that he might carry a whole arsenal if he wanted to but that he had to respect property around there. As I turned, I couldn't help laugh-



ing, mad as I was. Lucinda Briggs had seen the pistol and had gone off the fence, like a turtle off a log, and was making for the house, tearing through the currant bushes and scattering the chickens in all directions.

And so the great egg question was settled. It wasn't a very big thing among the troubles we had upon us, but what happened in connection with it showed the case we were in and what we had to expect. As for the fowls, they stuck to their new love. The barn became their headquarters as the weather got colder and by early fall they were Americans, every one of them.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### VARIOUS SMALL HAPPENINGS.

I've had

A fad

Of late, in puffing at a hubble-bubble,

Chiboque, nargileh, hookah—what you will—

Deeming the pleasure double,

Inhaling smoke through perfumed water; still

I'm not quite assured; I only know

That as I lie, while smoke-wreaths upward curl,

I make a striking oriental show,

And deeply have impressed the hired girl.

I caught her talking with the girl next door,

Who thus a vaunting testimony bore:

—'My master smokes a meerchaum pipe as brown

As coffee; 'tis the finest pipe in town!'

Then Nora, tossing back her hair unkempt,

Replied in tones of withering contempt;

"Meershom! Phwats that? Its not worth while to talk

The day wid ye!

Meershom, indade! Bedad Oi'll hear no more!

*Me* masther's got some sthoyle about him, for

*He* smokes a hose fixed on a cushpidor!

Go 'way wid ye!'

—*Household Treasures.*

There's no use talking—after that enterprise with the hens, Lucinda Briggs thought I was the greatest man in the world, and conducted herself accordingly. I had a lot of fun with her over the

manner in which she got away after seeing Gaherty's pistol, but I couldn't make her angry, ready as she usually was for any difficulty. She thought I'd showed talent with the hens' nests and in getting the fowls over to us so, and that settled it. I was a hero with her after that, and, as it came out, her opinion of me put plenty of work on my hands in the long-run.

It got to be just that time in the year when things are brown, but when the trees are not bare yet; when there are still plenty of birds to be seen, and the high-holders—"yellow-hammers" some folks call them—are weaving up and down in their flight from fence to fence, or stub to tree, when the crows and blue-jays think they own the earth, and when the cows look through the fence at the pumpkins in the cornfield and give a kind of whining bellow. No one knows better than a cow that pumpkin is good to eat.

So the fall work was upon us, and it came that we had need for some things not saleable, or, at least, things that we did not wish to sell, which were grown on the Canadian side. Between his quail and squirrel-shooting and his occasional visits to Canadian towns near by Jennison found time to keep a tolerably close eye on what we did on

the Mackenzie farm, and he asked me one day what we were going to do with the pumpkins—we had raised a great lot on that side—and with a stack of good clover we had in one of the Mackenzie fields. I told him I thought we'd feed them to the cattle very soon, as we wanted to save what was in the barns for winter use. It wasn't late enough for hay-feeding, for there was pretty good pasture yet, but the pumpkins would help out the cows with their fall milk. He asked me how that could be done, as we'd got all the cattle on our side the line, and I told him to wait and see. He only laughed and said we were an odd lot, and then began telling what a pretty wing-shot he'd made at a late wood duck he'd started up down the creek the day before.

As a matter of fact, I didn't know what to do about the pumpkins myself. The cows needed them, or would do so soon, and we'd sown them pretty thickly, with regard to this same use of them late in the season. I talked with David about them, but he only laughed and said he guessed a man who could get eggs over could get pumpkins over, too, somehow, and that he would leave the management of the thing to me. And there I was with a worse puzzle on my mind than I

had when Lucinda Briggs came to me for help about the eggs.

I plotted and planned for several days without any good coming of it. I was resolved that we shouldn't actually violate the law, and I knew that if we drove the cattle across the line, or even opened the fences to let them go across, Gaherty would seize them upon some excuse, and that, showing the intent of the thing, he might really be able to have some sort of a case against us. There is a difference between a cow driven or coaxed across a line like that, and a hen which can fly, and which even the law doesn't presume anyone can manage. So I wandered about in a quandary all the time.

One day I was walking along the road toward the east field, and still racking my brains over this problem of the pumpkins, for I could see them gleaming out in the field close by me to the north, when, as I reached the place where the road turned a little, I happened to think that I had left the American side and was now on Canadian soil. I told in the beginning of this clumsy story, and tried to show in a rude map I drew, how, because of the creek, the roadway turned out and took in, on a curve, quite a strip of Canadian land, so that

the fence on the Long farm at its greatest bend was really a rod or so over into the Dominion. There was one little stretch of it of about fifty feet which was, as near as anyone could tell by sighting along the roadway, almost exactly on the line. I squinted along this piece of fence, without much more than thinking of how plumb upon the line it was, when there came suddenly upon me a great idea. We had the line, in one place, entirely within the Long farm! Why not, somehow, use it to help me out of my difficulty?

I thought of what a boundary line really was. It was something with no width at all. Take a piece of twine so fine that you could hardly feel it in your fingers and lay it along and divide it into ten thousand strips and yet each strip would be wider than the distance between the two countries. There was no distance at all. The cows should eat the pumpkins!

I didn't go to the east field that day. I went back to the house and found David and told him what I had a mind to do and he told me to go ahead. I hunted up John Cross and we went out in the woods and spent the rest of that day and all of the next in cutting down some young oak trees and making about a dozen of the prettiest and

strongest oak fence posts you would see in a day's journey. We made them seven feet long each and hewed them off squarely on one side with a broad-axe, and there wasn't one of the lot that wasn't a good eight inches through. And then we sunk post-holes along that fifty odd feet of fence I've spoken of as being just on the line and put in enough of the posts so that they were only six feet apart. The Canadian side of the posts, the flat side, was precisely on the line, as nearly as we could figure it, and we partly boarded up that side with good half inch pine plank, as tight as a drum, using tenpenny nails for the work. The posts were set two feet and a half in the ground. I didn't propose to have that fence broken down by cows crowding against it.

I said we partly boarded up the fence. We boarded it from the top down to within maybe two feet of the ground, then, on the Canadian side, we sunk two-inch planks, end to end, in the ground about eighteen inches from the fence. We waited a day or two until the ground about the fence and the sunken planks were solid and then we boldly brought down pumpkins from the Mackenzie field and filled full with them the open space between the planks and the opening in the fence. Then

we drove the cows in our own field down there to see what they should see.

It must not be supposed that Jennison was doing nothing all this time, nor, for that matter, Gaherty either. Gaherty saw what was going on as soon as we began work and posted off to Jennison to tell him all about it. The Canadian Government was being robbed under his very eyes I don't think Jennison was much impressed—though it was long afterward when I heard of the visit—but he kept a lookout and the day when we brought the pumpkins he was there. So was Gaherty.

The cows, as we drove them up, got suddenly interested as they neared the fence. They caught sight of the yellow ridge lying close to the opening and rushed forward bellowing eagerly. How they dived at the pumpkins and how hard they tried to eat them, but without any result. We had forgotten something. I saw that in a moment, and went for an axe, then I batted those pumpkins into pieces and the way the cattle hauled them through the opening and ate them would have done good the heart of any man who doesn't like to see a cows hip-bones stick up like little lighthouses and who knows the difference between a smooth and a rough body.



David, who was with me, had said only a good-day to the two officers and no more. That had been the way with him from the beginning. There was a difference in the way he spoke to Gaherty, who had felt his hand once, and the manner in which he noticed Jennison, whom, I think, he rather liked, but he didn't talk any. It fell to me, in a way, to be the buffer between the people and the laws, and the customs-men seemed to feel it. It was only to me they spoke when they said anything, and I was glad of it. I knew David. I knew that the man was trying to keep cool, and that he was trying to keep himself within bounds, that he was thinking of Alice and the two babies and that he had made up his mind that he would have some sense, whatever might happen, no matter how much he might want to lick anybody, and that he had said to himself, "I'll leave everything to Jason, and it will come out all right somehow." I knew this, though it may seem like vanity to say it, and I tried to conduct myself accordingly.

We stood there watching the cows feeding, no one uttering a word for a long time. Then Jennison spoke up:

"I say, old man, don't you think you are breaking the law?"

I answered what I thought was right: "No, sir, I am not breaking the law at all. The pumpkins are ours and we can put them where we please on the Canadian side. The cattle are ours and we can drive them where we please on the American side. If they choose to put their heads through the fence and eat anything they find there we can't stop them, can we? We are not expected to watch our cattle, are we, to take care that they don't eat across a certain line drawn across country, a line that nobody can see? I don't think any government tries to control that sort of thing. It would be getting matters down a little too fine. Somebody would get mad. Several thousand people—and they wouldn't be all of one country either—would get mad and then there would be trouble which wouldn't be ended in a day. That's what I think in my homely way, and that's the reason the cows are eating as they are at the pumpkins."

Jennison didn't get mad a bit, but he looked sober. He spoke calmly enough:

"You understand, Jason, that I must do my duty and you understand, too, that, as we stand talking here, a lot of American cows are eating Canadian pumpkins and dragging them across the line. That is clear enough, isn't it?"

I was obliged to say that it was.

"Well, the individual committing a crime may be an innocent agent or not, that doesn't matter. Officers of the law have only one obligation, that is to arrest the perpetrator of a crime when it is going on before their eyes. Do you know of any reason why I shouldn't seize the cows?"

"They are on American soil," I said.

"But do you know of any reason why I shouldn't seize on that part of them which is over here? They are transporting property into the United States."

"You'd have to drag over the rest of the cows," I said, "in order to accomplish anything, and then you would have trouble with Uncle Sam."

"I don't know about that," he said, "it is the United States, or at least persons or things in the United States, who are the aggressors, just now you see. It's almost an invasion. There is only one thing which relieves the situation a little and makes me think that, after all, we can arrange it so that there won't be any very serious trouble. Would you like to know what it is?"

I said I would, of course.

"Well," said Jennison, grinning, "there isn't any duty on pumpkins brought into the United States from Canada"

I've felt myself what the young boys to-day call a "chump" a good many times in my life, but I don't believe I ever felt myself more so than when Jennison made that remark. There I had been in a fume for days and days over nothing at all. We could have hauled the pumpkins to the border and pitched them over to the cows at any time.

David looked at me, then looked at Jennison, then turned red in the face and then burst out laughing. Gaherty, who was standing a little way off, looked only disappointed and disgusted. Jennison kept on grinning until I got over the fence and went up to him. "I don't think much of you," I said. "My opinion of you is that you can't hit a quail or a squirrel either unless it is within ten feet of you, but I don't mind saying this: that if you'll go down to Magone the next time I have to be there I'll set up the ale and a good dinner."

The Canadian laughed and said he would go with me soon, and then David and I started for the house together. I was bothered all the way over the joke Jennison had on me when, there came to my mind the idea that the joke might be presently the other way. There was no duty on raw pumpkins but there was duty enough on other things.

As we walked home David unbosomed himself a little. "That was a great idea of Jennison's," he said, "to let us go ahead in that way and then to laugh at us. I think, Jason, that when you're in Magone—and I'll get up a reason for having you go within a day or two—you ought to get up some sort of joke on him in return."

I said I would try, though, as it turned out, Jennison didn't go with me after all, and then, as we walked, we got to talking again as we hadn't done for a long time over the reason of laws, which seemed contrary to nature and which didn't seem to do anybody on either side any good. We kept talking till we got to the house, and after supper that night, we took up the subject again with old man Mackenzie joining in.

"It isn't right," said David, after we had put the case, but we didn't have much of a debate because one of the twins decided to have the colic and there was trouble in the house and David had to leave us. But not very much later we got at the same matter again. We couldn't help it.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE DRIFT OF THINGS.

The old, blue crane stays late.  
Why does he wait?  
As the ruffed grouse in lowland haunts you seek,  
You note him flying slowly up the creek,  
Though in years past he has not lingered so,  
Has staid not till there came a hint of snow.  
Why does he stay? Naught tempts him to remain—  
The creek's banks have been filled with autumn rain,  
And where, in August, all it bed was dry,  
Save where the deepest of its hollows lie,  
And where to feed on prisoned fish in schools,  
He flitted like a ghost between the pools,  
Is now a murky stream with currents swift,  
Its surface laden with the woodland drift.  
Past is the time of drouth;  
Why does the old blue crane not seek the south?  
Why does he stay when it is growing cold?  
Is it because the blue crane is so old?  
Knows he that 'tis his time to die,  
And would he rather that his bones should lie  
Upon the muddy creek's leaf-coated strand  
Than perish in his flight in some strange land?  
The mink may have a feed—his eyes are keen—  
But not a feast—the old, blue crane is lean.

—*With Nature's Creatures.*

It had become full autumn now, and the trees  
were getting bare, and there were rains, and, in-

stead of shallows and sand-stretches with open clam-shells at the margin here and there, showing where the coons had emptied them, the creek was a rolling flood and the roads were in bad condition. The nights were short; there was no more pasture in the fields, and the cattle began to huddle around the barns. It was time to begin feeding them, and it was then that I thought again of the way I would get even with Jennison.

The stout board fence with the opening through it at the bottom was still standing, of course, in all its glory, though after the first happening there we had drawn the pumpkins to the fence and tossed them over as the cows needed them, and any other sort of fence would have been as good, provided it was no higher. Just now, though I was glad we had sunk the posts. I went down there, and, with much trouble, we had nailed them on so well, knocked off the top boards, all but one. This left a fence not three feet high, with an opening at the top and below. A cow could come up to it and reach over almost to the ground.

Well, there was the stack of clover hay, and beside that a stack of peas unthreshed, on the Canadian side, and we would have to give our cows something to eat before stabling them daily for the winter. I told David, as I had about the



pumpkins, what I thought was the best thing for us to do, and he said, as he had done before, that I should go ahead. "I think you're likely to get even with Jennison, too," he said, laughing, when I told him what I had in mind.

We worked on the Canadian side then. We had a good yoke of oxen over there and a wagon, and there was an old hay-rack turned up alongside the end of the barn. We put the rack on the wagon and got a pretty good load off the stack of clover, and hauled it down beside the strip of fence where we had fed the pumpkins to the cows. We unhitched the oxen then and stacked the load neatly. Then we went back after a small load of the straw from the pea-stack. This was for the sheep. We had, as I have said, only a small flock of them, and, while they could feed closer than the cattle, it was getting too damp for them in the fields. We had thought of threshing out the peas in the Mackenzie barn, but the price for them wasn't very high at that time, and sheep are very fond of peas and pea-straw, and some of this feed we concluded would be just the thing to help them out with. Next day I drove the cattle down to the fence early, and pitched off enough hay to give them a good feed. They reached over and at it, just as if they were feeding at a manger in the barn.



Gaherty was there, of course, and so was Jennison, and things were just the same as when we first fed the pumpkins, with the difference that Jennison didn't look quite so pleased. He was soberer of look this time. He told me that I was importing Canadian hay into the United States; but what could I say! I told him in return that there might be a duty on hay, but that we could put our own hay anywhere we pleased inside the limits of the Dominion. If American cows reached over and ate it the affair was unfortunate, but what could we do?

Jennison only laughed then, very much as he had done when I fed the pumpkins, and said he wasn't collecting much duty on hay just now, but that he did feel a little interest in the pea-straw we had there. What were we going to do with that? I said it was for the sheep, and that he'd see how it was done later. And, after the cows had fed, we had the sheep there, and they went at the straw through the lower opening in the fence. Jennison spoke up again:

"I suppose you argue the same way about the peas and the sheep that you did about the cows and the clover?"

I answered that I couldn't see any difference, and then the man got in earnest:

"There's a great difference," he broke out; "there are peas in that straw yet, and there's an export duty on peas of ten cents a bushel, and your're exporting them."

I said that I thought he was mistaken; that the sheep might be exporting them, but as for me, I'd only put the animals close to the line.

Jennison was really mad, for once, but managed to control himself, and was almost laughing when he answered me:

"It's all a quibble, and you know it," he said "You're playing a trick to beat the law, and, while I can't seize anything—I can't break down a fence and take a sheep from the American side—I can report the thing to my government at Ottawa. I shall do that."

He went away and Gaherty went with him. I noticed that the two were talking together as they went, which bothered me a little, for I knew that, ordinarily, Jennison would have nothing to do with the other man. In fact, as I learned afterwards, he didn't have anything to do with him then; that is, anything in particular—but Jennison was aroused, and, for the time being, looked upon us as almost the worst kind of law-breakers. But his fit didn't last long after he had sent in his report, a

report which, as he told me afterwards, he was rather ashamed of.

So I got even with Jennison, and the cows and sheep got fat. It was a great joke about the house and, it led one night to a beginning again of the same old argument between Mackenzie and David and me. We got to talking about the tariff and the reasons for it. In the midst of everything David said something which has caused me a great deal of thinking since. I hope I may live to see what the boy prophesied, and as he said it would be.

It was only a night or so after the hay and pea-straw happening in which Jennison got the worst of it, that we got to talking over the matter. Old man Mackenzie seemed to think that we had really done something wrong and, though he didn't say so outright, one could see that he felt it. David, of course, agreed with me as to all we had done. We were, in a way, fighting two governments, and yet we felt that we were right. I've read of how the smugglers who used to bring things from France into England thought they were right, too, when they couldn't have been really broad-minded and patriotic citizens figuring for the general good of the country, as planned by their men in office, to

have done as they did—but the cases were not alike. France doesn't lie alongside of England with the same sort of people in each country and the same relations with the rest of the world, and the rest of the world, aside from these two, away off and on other continents. So that the remembrance of those sturdy law-breakers, who lived on the water most of the time and hid their spoil in caves in Cornwall and all around, didn't affect me much.

I thought of us all the while as a species of smugglers, but we seemed unlike anybody else, and we seemed right. To be right is the main thing, surely, and we were right enough. We were not in trade of any kind, and we only wanted to be left alone with our acres of ground to raise things on.

I'm drifting away, I suppose, from what I started to tell about. I wanted to tell of what was said on this one night when the three of us—one sturdy, good, Tory Canadian, one average American, and the American hired man—got talking together again on the tariff. None of them knew much about it, I mean definitely and surely, save as it concerned themselves.

It started, this discussion, in a remark by old

man Mackenzie that we ought to break no laws, "even in a sharp Yankee way," as he put it. I fired up a little at this, and said we hadn't been sharp at any time but only open and above board. I said we were nothing but some human beings trying to live, and that some people from somewhere were preventing us. We knew, in a general way, that there was a certain line which must be crossed only with caution, but that we happened, as it were, to live on both sides of that line, and that we had certain rights of our own, no matter what the line might be.

Then Mackenzie got excited a little and delivered himself. I'll do him the credit to say that the old man was honest in all he thought.

"Ye think ye're doing right," he said, "and that ye're justified in all that has happened or is likely to happen. Weel, men, I don't think so. The law is first; men wiser than we made it. Ye shouldna' have allowed the coos and sheep to eat over and under the fence."

David stood up from his seat for a moment. He looked at his father-in-law, glared for a moment, and then sat down, ashamed of himself. I was glad of it. But though he had got control of his temper, he was full of talk. He did talk, and he

interested me in what he said. It wasn't all about Canada and the United States. He broke out earnestly:

"I wish one man somewhere would do at once something he is going to do as sure as the sun shines—and I don't know the man's name or what town he is living in."

We didn't know what to think of such a remark.

"What do you mean?" I said.

"I wish the man who is going to invent a means for carrying people and property through the air would hurry up," David answered. "I wish he might accomplish something definite right at once, so that we might have no further trouble with these absurd laws which make brothers enemies, after a fashion, whether they want to be so or not. Then all would be different."

This was so strong a departure, at least it seemed to be so, from what we had been considering that we both asked David what he was really talking about.

"Why," he said, "this annoyance is, it seems to me, but the running round in a circle of the small creatures. Men should never be on the terms that the men situated in Canada and the United States are. And, sitting in some room

somewhere, studying to-night, it may be, is the man who is going to stop it all. It is a discovery he is working on. He has only one thing left to solve and I suppose electricity will help him out. He has but to devise an engine with great driving power and no weight to speak of, and then we'll have air ships."

"Air ships!" said the old man; "ye've gone daft boy, but even had the world got airships, what would that be to us or to the laws we must obey."

"What has it to do?" broke out David, "it has everything to do! If ever we get some means of going through the air what's to become of your tariff laws? How are you going to enforce them? Why, I tell you that this one possible invention would do more to change the world from a lot of wrangling peoples into one great community which would gradually adjust itself into the best thing possible than any invention since the world began! The telegraph, which lets nations talk together, has done wonders, but to be able to travel through the air would be to break down ten thousand walls. The north pole or the very heart of Africa would be the same so far as a free highway counts and there would be no stopping anybody from going anywhere. And how would you enforce any cus-



toms laws? Who could prevent the floating over the line on a dark night, or in the daytime either, for that matter, of anything any one wanted to bring? There'd be no tariff anywhere in the world six weeks after such an invention, because it would be impossible. I never thought of that feature of the thing before, though I've been deeply interested in all I've read in the newspapers about this aerial navigation, as they call it, but it never occurred to me before that it would do this one good thing, that it would help us out of our troubles. To-night the idea came to me and that's why I say I hope the fellow who is going to make the invention will hurry. Just a little clearing away of the cobwebs in somebody's head, just the stumbling upon this or that device for better chaining the lightning—and they're doing that now—and there we are! Hurrah for him!"

The man nearly took our breath away, as he did the first time we had ever talked on this same matter. Old man Mackenzie was as surprised as I, but he didn't seem to take much stock in David's idea. He said it was all nonsense, that fool people had been working on that invention for a thousand years and were no nearer it than ever. And, as for its interfering with the laws, why, even if men



did learn to go as they were not intended to go and went through the air like ghosts, there'd be laws, even then, and people would have to regard them.

David only laughed. He'd let off steam, so to speak, with all his talk about the air ship and was himself again. As for that fancy of his I rather agreed with him. Suppose air ships once really in use it didn't seem to me possible that any government in the world could enforce its tariff laws after that. But then, of course, there are many other great changes air ships would make. There couldn't be any more of the old style of wars, because the fellows up in the sky could smash any fort or any war-ship to pieces by dropping down dynamite, or doing something of that sort, and there wouldn't be any unknown peoples, because we could examine things in all the untraveled places I've read of, like away up the Amazon river, or the center of Africa, or in that strange place in Asia they call Thibet. And there'd be lots of other changes—but then the air ship hasn't been invented yet. I mentioned that fact to David.

We had a talk after old man Mackenzie had gone to bed as to what we had better do if the watch over us kept up and still annoyed us so, and David

for the first time seemed a little discouraged over the experiment of trying to run a farm in two countries. We were amazingly hampered. There were many things we needed over from one side to the other and we didn't know just how to act. As I've tried to make clear we didn't want to become real law-breakers or to seem so and we'd never have been noticed probably but for Vincent. Finally David spoke up:

"I'll tell you what it is, Jason; nothing very serious has happened yet, but we've got to be careful. We never had to learn much before the farms were joined and so we're pretty ignorant about these very laws. See how mistaken we were about the clover, though of course it would have been different had we been moving it the other way. We've got to post ourselves and then make no mistakes. I'll write for the things we want."

So David wrote to Ottawa and got a wicked-looking yellow-covered pamphlet which had the title "Customs Tariff" on the outside, and he got from Washington a little blue book called the "New Pocket Tariff," and we read them evenings. We got to know a great deal we'd never dreamed of before, but we had a great deal to learn yet.

## CHAPTER XV.

### INCIDENT TO THE SEASON.

Crows are calling, leaves are falling,  
Winds appalling lash the river,  
Billow-showing with their blowing;  
Cows are lowing, all a-shiver.

Clouds unlifting, snowflakes sifting,  
Faintly drifting. We remember  
Sky as eerie, threatening, dreary,  
Don't we, dearie? 'Tis November!

—*Songs of the Seasons.*

We did study those books, that's a fact, and came to think ourselves very sharp and knowing in everything about the tariff. I got so stuck up about it myself that I was almost tempted to take a little risk, and see if I couldn't devise a way to lead Gaherty into some blunder. I told David of my fancy and he was inclined to agree with it, but something occurred which made me drop that idea suddenly. I was thinking one day of the affair of the clover and the pea-straw, and thinking of Gaherty, too, when, all at once, I asked myself: "Why didn't he do anything?"

I pondered over that for a long time. We knew

from rough experience that there was a tariff of four dollars a ton on hay brought in from Canada, and we had learned from the books we'd got that there was a duty of forty cents a bushel on peas, and the gorged cattle often crossed the line—and there Gaherty had stood by without making any fuss when we were experimenting to see how far we could go while, all the time, if we were going against the laws at all, we were making a bigger hole in those of the United States than in those of Canada. For instance, on peas the Canadian tariff was only ten cents as against forty cents the other way. I knew Gaherty and his disposition toward us well enough to feel that he hadn't restrained himself out of any love, and it perplexed me to account for his way in the matter. I'd been so full of what Jennison might do at the time that I had never thought of the man, and here he'd been holding off in a way I couldn't understand. I made up my mind that he must have had some reason for it, and I got alarmed, thinking he had laid some trap, until an idea came to me which relieved me a little, and which long afterward I found out was the right one. I decided that the whole point had to be as to whether or not they could make an arrest on account of animals feeding

or carrying that which on they had fed across the line, and that Gaherty had waited to see what Jennison decided before doing anything himself. When Jennison gave up on the peas and pea-straw, Gaherty had concluded that if the Canadian couldn't do anything, he couldn't, and that he might as well let that particular thing drop. And this was, in fact, the case.

In reality David and I had been worrying for some time without any need of it. There is no use disguising the truth that, having that man Gaherty near us and watching us was, in the bottom of our hearts, a nightmare and a dread, but, as it came out, the man was about at the end of his rope for the season. As I have already said, we had got things on the farm pretty well distributed for our uses. The stock on each place was about where we wanted it, and what there was left to sell was not enough on the Canadian side to amount to much.

Gaherty still hung around. We could see him occasionally, just as we could see a crow or some other shifting, tricky thing. David and I got so that we didn't look for him, but it wasn't so with the women folk. They hated the man so—I'm afraid even our Alice, with all her nobleness and

respect for the opinion of David, rather sympathized with the others—that they kept an eye on his movements all the time, and could locate him almost any hour of the day. Mrs. Long, who didn't often have much to say, couldn't speak of him with any patience, and as for Lucinda Briggs—well, it was worth while to hear her talk! She was in such earnest. All the harsh names she knew she put to that man, and she was after me continually trying to get me to do something to get the fellow into trouble. She had a great idea of what I could do, after all the things that had happened; but I didn't yield. I might have been tempted had Gaherty been a little less long-headed. But I was really afraid of him; I'm not ashamed to say that. We may have a sort of contempt for a wolf, but we sleep a little less soundly, all the same, when we know he is lurking about the clearing. Yet we were really in no danger at the time Gaherty went away.

He had considered what the chances were of catching us in anything serious during the winter, and had concluded that it wasn't worth while to do so much work with so little prospect of beating us and gratifying the vindictiveness which had grown up in him. Besides, I have no doubt he

felt somewhat shaky about the way his superior officers might look upon what he was doing. Of course, as I know now, they had got from his report too much of an idea of what was going on. They had got the idea that David Long was a particularly bad man on the line, and that, no doubt, behind all of what he was doing as a farmer, he had some big smuggling enterprise in hand, and that it was worth while catching him and making an example. But for a man to stay all winter on such business, and only report failure all the time, wouldn't do. We missed Gaherty—or rather the women did—and we heard in Magone, where we had some good friends, that he had gone again. We heard, too, nearer home, that Vincent had said, chuckling, that Gaherty would be around in the spring, and that the gang of law-breakers across the road would yet be brought up with a round turn. We didn't mind that much. They say that a burnt child dreads the fire, but we hadn't been scorched yet, to any serious extent.

After we had become thoroughly satisfied that we were rid of our nightmare, for the time at least we settled down to the regular life we might have led had things gone all right after the joining of the farms. It was getting pretty late in the fall



now. It was November, and what grass could be seen in the fields was brown, and where the crops had been the ground showed black and unpleasant. The skies were lead-colored, and there were sharp winds, and often there would be sifting flakes of snow in the air. Once we had an inch deep of snow, but it didn't last long. And it came to be pretty near Thanksgiving Day.

David and I were working in the barn one day—building a rack to carry out for the sheep to feed from, I believe—when he broke out:

“Jason, we must have a big Thanksgiving dinner.”

I said I thought it was a good idea.

“We’ve a good deal to be thankful for,” said David, “even if we have been bothered a lot by Vincent’s ugliness and scheming and the man Gaherty he has brought upon us. I never thought of it at the time the two farms were joined, but it was a matter of course that there would be some trouble if there happened to be anybody within sight who would be vicious and venomous and smart enough to take advantage of the thing. Vincent, who doesn’t like me, did that. He got a smart man, too, to help him. I don’t give Vincent any credit for it; it was all luck. But



Gaherty came, just the same, and he's a hard man. Yet we've wriggled through somehow, so far, and seem to be in tolerably good shape. I guess we've done with the trouble. It has robbed me of a lot of time, but we've learned something. We'll make the two farms pay now, because we know what to look out for. We ran against one of the biggest snags in the world, and we got off cheaply, and I'm satisfied. Now it's clear sailing. I feel like a real Thanksgiving dinner."

"So do I," said I; "but, David, I don't quite agree with you about the outlook. We haven't got done with Gaherty or the meanest of our troubles yet. I rather think we shall have something serious on our hands next summer, if it can be made so. That doesn't matter, just now, though we have done pretty well under the circumstances. We have beaten a man at his own game, and he's gone away tired. But a Thanksgiving dinner, something you forgot last fall, is about the most American thing in the world. What will your wife think of it, and what will your father-in-law say?"

"Alice will go in with me for anything, of course. You know that. The blessed girl is the only real patriot I know of. She has become as much American as Canadian, and is as much Canadian

as American, and I like her for it. And my mother will go into the thing knowing just how, for we always had Thanksgiving dinners when father was alive; and as for my father-in-law, I guess"—and here David hesitated a little—"Well, I propose, Jason, that we lay off for half an hour and go up and talk with him. I want you along, for I believe he cares more for your opinion on some things than he does for mine. Come along."

We went up to the house and didn't find old Mackenzie, but found him later on his own old place, sitting on the fence near where John Cross was fall plowing. He had been, as we learned, having a debate with John as to whether or not certain dead-furrows should have the plow run through them the second time or not. He received us rather gruffly.

While we were at the house it occurred to David to bring Alice along and she came with us laughing. When we found her father the blessed woman didn't say anything but only waited demurely. She knew it would be all right and was enjoying herself. She liked what we were doing, as I did. It made me feel kindly toward David, all this business. It showed me again what decentness and goodness there was in him. There was this

old man, who, legally speaking, though of course his overlooking was always worth something, had no right in the world to tell how anything should be done on either place. He had sold one farm and had no claim on the other, but he had advice to give all the time, and orders some of the time, and David allowed him to have pretty nearly his own way, which was by no means bad. But it was rather nice, I thought, to make such a point of asking his opinion about a Thanksgiving dinner. He was Alice's father, and men care a great deal for women—sometimes.

David explained that we'd just come over to ask his idea about a little American celebration we had in mind, and the old man, on the first impulse, snorted.

"Rot!" he said. "Where's the sense of your Thanksgiving, which ye observe whether the crops are good or bad, or ye've trouble or not? And ye've had some this year, and, happen, ye'll have some next, the way things are looking."

"That's all right," said David. "It's only a custom, and I thought we'd better observe it—in fact, we must; I want my boys to grow up liking it. And why can't you go in with us and have a good time"?

"Well, we have a Canadian Thanksgiving Day, too," said the old man, "why don't ye observe that? We're nearly even in the family."

David said he hadn't thought of it, and I who had forgotten that there really was a Canadian holiday of that sort asked the old man about it. He had something to say. He was a great reader in his way and could talk according to his lights. He seemed full of learning on the subject. Here is what he broke out with:

"I'm not going to pretend that we Canadians were the originators of Thanksgiving Day, because I've read somewhere that the custom dated back to the Harvest Home of the Celts and Saxons and of older ways—is that what we call it? That was a little before our time, I fancy, and before the time of the American celebration; ye ought to have known all about it, David. There's another story, too, which I have heard. The Canadian Thanksgiving is a pretty solid institution, I tell you. It comes in November also, but generally a week or two earlier than the American. The first or second Thursday in the month is usually appointed by the Governor-General, who causes the proclamation to be issued throughout the land. The first Governor-General started it, I think, but

I'm not quite sure. Anyhow, the way we keep Thanksgiving in Canada is a lesson to the Americans. Yes, it is, too! We don't devote it altogether to eating and drinking. No, we don't. To be sure we have turkey and roast beef, and plum pudding, and it is a holiday—a real one, with all the shops closed, but the main feature of the day is going to church, and being thankful, and giving to the poor. You ought to see the churches that day! Even the Methodists and the Baptists decorate their temples, but in the English churches it is almost as pretty as it is at Christmas time. Isn't it, Alice?"

Alice nodded. "Yes, father, but to me the best decoration always seemed the kegs of butter, and barrels of potatoes and flour, and bags of apples, and bundles of clothes they used to collect in the church basements for distribution among the poor, so that everyone should have something to be thankful for."

"Exactly what I was driving at," said the old man, contentedly; "the beauty of our Canadian Thanksgiving is that it isn't selfish, but everyone is expected to give that day according as he has prospered. After having done that, and returned thanks in church, he goes home to his dinner with

a conscience as good as his appetite. Sometimes I've wished we could have had the 'harvest home' of the old country instead of following so close to the American fashion, but I guess we couldn't very well take the time for holidaying any earlier, and, maybe, our Thanksgiving was just needed to set a good example to the Americans, anyway."

David nudged me, and then asked the old man to explain what he had meant by his reference to the other story he had heard in reference to the inauguration of the American festival.

Old Mackenzie looked pleased to get the chance of saying something on the subject, and remarked dryly that he had been told that the New England Thanksgiving came about through a party of doleful folk gathering together to appoint a day of fasting and prayer because of recent calamity. But among them was one cheerful fellow who waggishly persuaded them to be grateful for "all the things they hadn't got that they didn't want—disease for instance." And that so impressed them that they straightway decided upon having a day to give thanks in.

We all laughed, and old Mackenzie loudest of all, and I said that I thought I remembered hearing of an autumnal festival which used to be held by the North American Indians.

"Why!" said Alice, roguishly, "that must have been the original as well as the ab-original Thanksgiving of the western world."

The old man had only one more protest: "Ye didn't pay any attention to the Queen's Birthday," said he.

David was tickled and so was I. We had forgotten all about that celebration, but David had thought of it when it was too late, and had said that he was sorry we had missed it. He'd wanted to do something out of compliment to his wife and his father-in-law. He was open enough. He told all this to the old man, and it seemed to mollify him. He added that he intended in future to observe both Canadian and American holidays regularly. "We work too steadily, anyhow," he said, "and, besides, there are the twins. If you think I am not going to give that young Canadian a show—whichever of the two he may be—you're mistaken."

The old man couldn't stand that; he "caved in," as they say, and admitted that Thanksgiving Day was a good thing, and he'd be glad to join in observing it. "They were good people in their way," he said, "those Puritans of yours. They had a vagrant kirk, but they were strong men and



nonsense was not akin to them." And so, after David had talked with Alice and his mother—there was no doubt about them—we were all right.

I know I have wasted a lot of words on something that didn't amount to much—a Thanksgiving dinner is not a great thing—but it all comes to me because I remember that particular dinner so well, all that happened before it and what was said when it came off. I think it must have been something like a reaction, as they call it, from our worry, which made us all very much like children in getting ready for the affair. David was bound it should be the greatest dinner the house had ever seen, and all the rest of us were in sympathy with him. Of course, the first thing to be thought of was the turkey.

We had a number of young turkeys, and among them was one which, for his age, was a monster. It was decided that he was the bird for Thanksgiving Day, and it was decided, too, that something a little out of the common should be done with him. We wanted a wild turkey, but they were too scarce to make getting one certain, and David was inclined to grumble a little: "A tame turkey is all right," he said, "but it hasn't got the gaminess; it lacks the flavor of the woods, somehow,"



and then, after thinking a little, he launched his great idea:

"I tell you what we'll do! We'll make a wild turkey of this tame one, at least we'll come pretty near it. He shall taste like the best bird in the woods."

And he explained his plan and acted upon it at once. We built a rail pen under one of the sheds, and covered it and put in it a pan of water and a lot of straw and the big, young turkey. Lucinda Briggs was called into service then:

"I want this turkey to be eating all the time from now until the morning of Thanksgiving Day," said David, "and I don't want him to eat anything that a wild turkey doesn't. I want you to go out in the woods and gather all the beech-nuts and acorns and hazel-nuts you can, and so we'll feed him. He'll get a flavor then."

Lucinda Briggs was delighted with the idea, and the way that turkey fed for the next two weeks was a caution. He was gorged on beech-nuts and other food all the time, and, though he didn't get a great deal of exercise, was for a while the luckiest turkey on the place. How sleek he looked; how shiny his feathers were; how he did fill out, and how proud Lucinda Briggs was! That turkey

was the great anxiety and pride of everybody about the place. He was getting bigger every day, and we knew that every day he was getting more and more of the quality of the woods, that his meat would have something of the fragrance and sweetness of the unclaimed regions of nature and their products. We were very much engrossed in that turkey.

And Thanksgiving Day came at last, and there were a very good company of us assembled when it came. In the country one man or woman is as good as another, and John Cross and his family were invited over and came. There was another one, too—an outsider. "Why not invite Jennison?" said David. "He's a good fellow, though he is a customs officer, and maybe it will do him good to help celebrate a real Yankee holiday."

Alice agreed with David—that was to be expected—and Jennison was asked to come. He was with us when we gathered together to destroy that turkey and a lot of other things.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### SERIOUS MATTERS DEBATED.

And when the time of noble feast had come,  
To fair Queen Guinevere the blameless King  
Spake kindly, saying: "Now must we set forth  
Upon the Table Round such gallant feast  
As may become our royal courtesy  
And be fit meat for brave and royal knights."  
Then beauteous Guinevere, with lily hands,  
Forthwith did an immense plum-pudding make,  
Whispering the while with noble Launcelot,  
Who to the kitchen wandered after her,  
Though peering Galahad looked solemn things  
And courtly Tristram softly winked an eye.  
Arthur himself went out and bought the beef,  
A stately roast of good old English kind,  
And bravely was set forth the great repast.  
The knights were the Round Table ranged about,  
And many good things and some naughty ones  
Were there retailed in quite undertones  
By these, the pride and flower of chivalry.  
While, at the higher seat, the blameless King  
Was struggling valorously to carve the beef.  
"I fear, my love, the beef's a little tough,"  
Softly suggested fair Queen Guinevere,  
To which the King responded, then and there:  
"Perhaps you think I know not how to buy

Good beef! The fault is in the carving knife,  
Which is as dull as Launcelot, his wit;  
Your knives are always dull!" A silence fell  
Upon the knightly company, and still  
The blameless King made struggle with the beef,  
But could not part the strong integument.  
The gravy spattered over Guinevere  
And on the doublet of Sir Galahad.  
Whereat Sir Launcelot, in gibing mood,  
Said to Sir Galahad: "There Camelot  
Of sop to Cerberus then." The joke fell flat,  
Because the blameless king was getting mad;  
He swore a mighty ante-Saxon oath,  
And then in wrath upon the table leaped,  
And, drawing forth the sword Excalibar,  
Whacked fiercely, as the object were a Dane.  
But fruitlessly; the tissue would not yield.  
At last, exhausted, with his face aflame,  
The King commanded that the beef be borne  
From out the hall and pitched unto the swine;  
And the fair Queen, upon whose face a smile  
Had deepened from the opening of the fray,  
Carved up the pudding, and the wine came in,  
And there was an abundance, after all,  
And, when the fullness of the knights had come,  
It proved, despite the beef, a merry feast.

—*Libels of The King.*

I wish I could tell of things as some people can,  
as I have said before. There's a sort of knack  
I've often noticed in books which makes whatever  
is told interesting whether it amounts to much it-

self or not. If some-one who had that gift could tell about this dinner of ours, I believe it would be worth the reading. It was such a good dinner and we had such a good time over it.

The women folk had done their best. Mrs. Long had prepared all the Yankee dishes and Alice all the English ones and, we had such a boundless variety that we hardly knew what to eat. There were pumpkin pies and mince pies and Indian pudding and all the vegetable side dishes one could think of from Mrs. Long. And Alice had a great "pasty," as they called it, a deep pie filled up with birds David had shot, mighty good to eat, and cheese-cakes and, though it was a little early in the season, a great plum pudding. As for the turkey, it was all we had hoped for. Never before was such a turkey, at least never a tame turkey, which was as delicious as a wild one. I've read of how, in Holland or somewhere, they fatten geese until they have enormous livers, which are counted a great delicacy, but never was a fattening experiment with a fowl which turned out better than ours. That turkey had the flavor of all that is most delicious and eatable. We ate and ate and were happy, as people in the country, most of whom have good digestions, can be. I think the only ex-

ception was John Cross, and I think even he was feeling better than he had done for a long time.

John Cross hadn't gained any during the summer. He'd kept about as strong as ever and as equal to his work, but he'd lost a little rather than improved. His cheeks dropped in now, and there were darker blotches on the ugly yellow they had taken on before, and his eyes, which had been so open and square once, had a sort of foxy, begging look about them. He had braced up, though, to come to dinner and be a man among men again, and was on his good behavior as much as a man feeling as he did could be. He helped his wife keep an eye on the children—how the healthy little pigs did eat!—and tried to be sociable and good-hearted and jolly with the rest. I got to watching him pretty sharply—I couldn't help it, somehow—and I didn't notice anything out of the way with him except when he looked at Jennison, who was full of fun and having a great time with David and Alice. Then there would come a strange look over John Cross' face and, I'd almost start up as I saw it. I made up my mind more surely that the man had got to be a crank on the subject of our trouble over the tariff, and that he saw something to be dreaded and to hurt in anyone who had anything

to do with enforcing the laws. But my study of John Cross was but a trifle; the dinner was the main thing.

We got to talking about Thanksgiving and what the celebration meant and, then old man Mackenzie came out strong again on the Thanksgiving subject. He said it was all nonsense. He said we were but making a fuss over what was founded on nothing and meant nothing. It was only a fancy of a lot of new settlers in a strange land. It had "na significance," the old man said, but it "wasna' bad," because the dinner was good.

I noticed David looking at Alice and smiling as the old man delivered himself, and then, in the midst of all the racket and nonsense, the dear girl spoke up herself:

"I don't think despite what you said when we asked you to come, you've paid much attention to this Thanksgiving Day. There was no reason why you should. But it has its story, just as each one of our English holidays has its story. It doesn't go so far back, but it has its meaning just the same. I wish I could persuade David to read you something there is in a scrap-book in the wing."

The old man snorted: "What is in the scrap-book?"

Alice hesitated a little, and, looking at David, I saw him blush. That settled it. I knew that what Alice wanted to have read was something David had done, and when, finally, Lucinda Briggs was sent out by Alice for the scrap-book and David was commanded by his sweet owner to read, I knew well enough that it, was something that he had written when he was in the high-school at Magone.

"Listen to what David is going to read," said Alice, "it is the real, true story of the first Thanksgiving dinner that was ever eaten. It is just what happened, as near as can be judged from what history tells."

David was laughing, and his face was red, and the old scrap-book quivered a little in his hands. It was all foolish, but I've seen some very good men who were affected that way when they had got to get up and say something or read something. I've often thought that this was, in a sense, a test of the real quality and strength of a man. The shallow, conceited fool will read in public or make a speech readily enough, according to his ability, but the man of thought is doubtful, and is liable to break down before a crowd. And all this has nothing to do with the dinner.



David rose up, blushing, as I say, and read the little story in verse. And this was the manner of it:

In Sixteen Hundred and Twenty-one  
 The Pilgrim Fathers had just begun  
 To till intractable land which lay  
 On the shores of Massachusetts Bay,  
 And the first of the tardy crops they had  
 Was, putting it mildly, mighty bad.  
 In Sixteen Hundred and Twenty-two  
 The reapers again had little to do,  
 For the harvest was equally thin and late  
 And a boom was lacking in real estate,  
 And the Pilgrim Fathers were looking blue,  
 For they couldn't determine just what to do.  
 But men they were of a stubborn grain,  
 And they planted, guarded and reaped again,  
 And in Sixteen Hundred and Twenty-three  
 The crops were what they had hoped to see;  
 And Governor Bradford, thoughtful man,  
 Decided 'twould be a commendable plan  
 To celebrate such unusual luck  
 By a feast not wholly of garden-truck,  
 And a band of hunters he ordered out  
 To perambulate in the woods about,  
 With a warning 'twere to their lasting shame  
 If they didn't return with a lot of game.  
 Hunters they were of deserved renown  
 And the spoil of the forest bore them down

When the band from the arduous chase returned,  
And fires of hickory snapped and burned,  
And prompt were the preparations made  
For a feast. Some hundreds of plates were laid,  
And the Puritans in their best were clad  
For the biggest blow-out they'd ever had.  
Old Sachem Massasoit and his band  
Were invited to come and take a hand  
In the jollification. Of course they came;  
Indians kept sober then, and tame.  
And all fell to with an appetite,  
The Red Man rivaling hungry White.  
'Twas the first game dinner of dignity  
Given in the New World, you see.  
And, from what Old Colony writers say,  
Very good prog they had that day!  
Steak of fattest of elk was there,  
Steak of venison, steak of bear,  
Grouse and plover and snipe and quail,  
Redhead, mallard, and teal and rail,  
Roast wild turkey, the king of birds,  
Pots of hominy, toothsome curds,  
And mighty pasty and steaming stew—  
Every stomach there got its due.  
But working jaws made the only sound;  
No gurgling bottle was passed around;  
There was no rude jest nor unseemly song,  
For they wet their whistles with nothing strong—  
But they ate with vim! How they tucked away

The waiting victuals that autumn day!  
 Dyspepsia hadn't begun to be  
 In Sixteen Hundred and Twenty-three.  
 Though the colonists suffered abundant ills,  
 They didn't have any from liver pills;  
 For decidedly harder had been there lot  
 To get what to eat than digest what they'd got.  
 The eating, of course, had an end at last,  
 And then, to refer to the grand repast,  
 The eloquent Governor Bradford rose,  
 With his sober face and his sober clothes,  
 And for what was eaten gave earnest thanks  
 In a neat little effort which justly ranks  
 Among the best of things of its kind—  
 The ways of Providence he'd in mind,  
 And he hoped that a lesson of trust 'twould teach—  
 That was the point of his clever speech  
 And such was our precedent, such the way  
 That the custom arose of Thanksgiving Day!

David, after he had got over his first scare, read pretty well, and I could see that even old man Mackenzie and Jennison were a little interested in the story told in such a nonsensical way. I don't suppose either of them had ever heard it before or thought of the American Thanksgiving Day as anything but some foolish sort of celebration of the Americans, and without any reason for being at all. But the facts were pretty nearly right as

David gave them in his unpretending verses, as I knew from what I'd read, and both Jennison and old man Mackenzie seemed to understand that the day meant something, that it meant the recognition of what had been done by a lot of sturdy Englishmen who were in the minority at home and concluded to face anything rather than be imposed upon by a majority in the control of consciences. I've always been proud myself of those Puritan fathers of ours. They were about as narrow-minded and intolerant a lot, I guess, as ever lived, they were as cruel in their bigotry as Red Indians, burning poor old women at the stake because someone called them witches and enacting laws for themselves which were as oppressive and senseless as could be conceived of. But they were honest and in dead earnest all the time, narrow as they were, and they would fight. They didn't have much faculty about some things. They took up a poor lot of farming land and sweated over it, when they might have done better by going somewhere else, but they did stick to the job and did get pretty good results in the end. They always remind me of that other lot of Englishmen who fought with Cromwell, Praise-God-Barebones, and the rest. The men with Cromwell were in such

earnest and such a bigoted lot, at the same time! If I'd been living then and among them, I should have been proud of the way they went into things, though, maybe, I should have fought, myself, with the royalists, they were so much better fellows.

As I was saying, old man Mackenzie and Jennison both seemed a good deal interested in what David read and, after he had got through, we fell to talking of the Puritans and their ways. Some one said that baked beans ought to have been counted in among the dishes of the first Thanksgiving dinner, but David explained that it wasn't likely that they had beans to eat then. The bean crop is not one of the first that comes after a forest is conquered and, besides that, there is no evidence that the Down-east tendency to beans was felt much until after the Revolution. About all the Puritans thought of was how to get enough to live on, in any way, and they turned, naturally, to the Indian's maize, and corn in all its forms of cooking was what pulled them through. People were too apt, David said, to think New England people and the Puritans were just the same, when, in fact, a great many of the descendants of the real Puritans were away out West, subduing new land and occasionally fighting Indians, still. It was quite a

learned talk, that made by David as he go interested.

When a lot of people have eaten very heartily and of such food that digestion is easy I've noticed that they always get kind o' reflective and good-natured and talk more real common-sense than they are likely to at any other time. They have that feeling of good will toward everybody which I suppose we should all have always and they are more likely to be unprejudiced in all they think and say. It was so with us after that dinner. Even John Cross, as he told me in a jubilant sort of way, which was all the sadder because he seemed so glad and because it showed how bad his case was, felt a little less oppression than usual after eating, and, as for the rest, they were simply satisfied and awfully contented. We all went out into the sitting-room—at least all but Lucinda Briggs, who stayed to clear off the table—and sat down, and we men got out our pipes and there was a confab. We talked about most everything.

David had some cigars he'd got in Magone but nobody seemed to care for them. Jennison, like most Canadians, preferred a pipe, and we on the farm had all got into the same habit. It chanced that I fell to talking about something with Jennison,

I forget just what, when his pipe gave out. He had said that the tobacco we were using was a little mild for him and I happened to think of some cut plug I had in a little can which stood by the clock in the dining-room. I told him what I had, and he said he believed he'd like some of it and so we went off together to get some of the other brand. We both filled our pipes and, then, as Lucinda Briggs had cleared off the table and gone and we were all alone there, we sat down for a moment to sample the cut-plug. Then we got to talking about things in general and it came around that Jennison told me how he was situated, how he happened into the business of a customs officer and what he thought of it all. Of course it interested me greatly for that which had anything to do with the tariff, if only the experience of a man collecting on one side, bore directly on the subject which affected the welfare of every one beneath the roof under which we were sitting. He told me of all the difficulties of the place he held, how, while his present job was the easiest one possible, he might be sent to-morrow on some mission which would mean only hard work and no gain and that he wished he were in an occupation which didn't require that he should be looking out all the time

for some fault of other people. "But it's only business," he said, "and I suppose you, Jason, and David and all the rest understand it.

I told him that I thought we had sized him up reasonably well and that if David hadn't liked him he wouldn't have been invited to our Thanksgiving dinner. Then we got talking about the tariff and had a difference of opinion and were at it for more than an hour when David came in to see what had kept us. I bear what we said in mind because we got so much in earnest and because of what happened next year, which was enough to make any man in the world remember anything on the subject, to his dying day.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### TWO MEN TALKING.

The Jester remarked to the Great Tycoon:  
"They do things better up there in the moon.  
    She's bright,  
    She's light.  
    On the mundane side,  
    She's bathed in glory, whate'er betide;  
    And that's because  
    Beneficent laws  
    Confine her light to her half we view!"  
    Poor Jester! How little he knew!  
    The sun's rays  
    Have better ways  
And take their course on a broader plan  
Than if directed by jealous man,

—*Political Economy*

"What do you think of it, anyway?" I said.  
"What do you think of this system which makes  
life uncomfortable for us, which keeps you here  
and that man Gaherty here, at the expense of the  
other people, and which doesn't benefit anybody  
particularly?"

Jennison answered that he didn't know about

that; he said there were two sides to the question. And then the debate began.

David sat and listened, but didn't have much to say. I put the question to Jennison fairly, for I wanted to have a good talk myself on that same old subject, which had proved of such importance to us, and here was a man who could talk honestly for the other side, a customs officer at that! I wanted Jennison to tell me if he thought the tariff between Canada and the United States was good for anything at all?

The man was puzzled and thoughtful. "Well," he said at last, laughing, "it's certainly pretty good for such people as Gaherty and me and a lot of others who get their living out of it, but about its general good for the two countries I'm not so sure. You can't afford to pitch into it, anyhow, if you're a good American. You would be going against your own statesmen."

"How many of them?" I blurted out, for that irritated me. "What do we gain by a tariff, except, maybe, to lift a little the price of horses and cattle and hogs and poultry and eggs, and a few other things raised on a farm? And we don't buy enough of such things from you—for we raise them ourselves—to make a difference to amount to any-

thing, except along the border. It's just the same the other way, so far as you feel it. It costs you more for what you get from the United States. There can be no great gain anywhere, for the two countries lie side by side, and produce about the same crops. We can hurt each other a great deal more, each of us, than we can help ourselves. We can hurt you pretty seriously in some ways. We hurt you by putting a tariff on the coal that comes in from Nova Scotia, but we hurt worse the manufacturers in New England who want the coal. And all we gain is that coal of our own has to be carried a long distance by railroad. The money of the people is wasted a little more on railroad freights, that is all. I've read all about it, and know what I'm talking about. And there are many other things. Here is something that I cut out of a newspaper, a Canadian newspaper at that. It seems to me pretty good sense. It tells just how you lose. The man who is writing just supposes the case of a Canadian farmer who takes a load of farm stuff to market in Woodstock or Toronto, or London. He gets these prices:

100 pounds wool at 16 cents per pound . . . .	\$16.00
100 bushels barley at 45 cents . . . . .	45.00

20 dozen eggs at 12 cents..... 2.40

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Total for Canadian load.....\$63.40

He then goes out to purchase necessities for which he pays as below:

50 gallons American coal oil at 20 cents....\$10.00

20 gallons sirup at 40 cents..... 8.00

200 pounds wire nails at 3 cents..... 6.00

800 pounds barb-wire fencing at 4 cents.... 32.00

10 1-2 gallons boiled linseed oil at 70 cents.. 7.35

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Total.....\$63.35

You see that the Canadian has five cents left. An American farmer goes into Buffalo or Detroit with the same kind of a load as that sold by the Canadian. He gets the following prices:

100 pounds of wool at 34 cents..... \$34.00

100 bushels barley at 80 cents..... 80.00

20 dozen eggs at 16 1-2 cents..... 3.30

---

Total for American load.....\$117.30

He buys, we'll say, the same kind of goods as the Canadian bought, but he pays the following prices:

50 gallons coal oil at 7 cents..... 3.50

20 gallons good syrup at 25 cents..... 5.00

200 pounds wire nails at \$1,80 per 100 . . . .	3.60
800 pounds barb-wire fencing at 2 1-2 cents	20.00
10 1-2 gallons boiled linseed oil at 44 cents	4.62
<hr/>	
Total . . . . .	\$36.72

Doesn't this show that the American sold for \$53.90 more than the Canadian got and bought for \$26.63 less? Adding this gain by selling higher and his saving by buying lower, isn't his load worth \$80.53 more than the Canadian farmer's load. Isn't it fair to say that an American farmer is worth from \$500 to \$1,000 a year more than the Canadian? Of course the figures aren't just right. The prices of things vary from week to week, but the showing is fair enough on the average. How good a thing it would be for you if we could all work together."

"But," said Jennison, "even suppose it would be better in some ways if there were no tariff—we can't go contrary to England, and you would still have a tariff against her."

"Yes, of course, though I do think it will be all abated some day. But England is a country away off, and in competition with us. Canada is just like a part of ourselves. To 'discriminate,' as they

call it, against Ontario, for instance, is just the same as for the rest of our country to cut off Michigan and call that state an enemy. Yet no one would call such a thing wise or say it would be profitable. It's only the idea which has grown up that you—people of our blood and living with us on the same big farm, as it might be called—must be got ahead of, somehow. And you, on your side, have the same idea."

"We must stand by England," said Jennison.

"Of course—of course I mean in all real regard for the country most of us come from, at least most of our grandfathers and great-grandfathers. But it seems to me it's nonsense to talk about any sentiment that interferes with healthful, honest living. You've got a lot of foxy leaders—oh, I read your Canadian papers!—who talk about 'nationalism' and all that. They are doing more to keep the Dominion from being what it should be than any other thing that affects you. They're making all your best young men come over and become Americans, where they can do better. Why, your population is not increasing as fast as that of the land you came from! Doesn't it stand to reason that if the two countries were all one in business, and prosperous just alike, the young men wouldn't have to leave?"

Jennison thought this might be so, and David was delighted. "Go for him, Jason!" he said; "you're getting the best of it. You may not be a very patriotic American, but you're talking sense, I think."

"There's no such thing as patriotism without sense—that's what I believe; and any other kind is foolishness or a fraud. It's foolishness with the great mass of people on both sides the line on this Canadian tariff question, and it's a fraud with some of the political leaders. This particular tariff is a sort of buncombe factory for them. Any man of sense can see that it doesn't help one country any to hurt another, and that, even if we may gain a little by hurting someone else, it isn't a very decent thing to do for a people pretending to be civilized and Christian."

"Where does your Christianity come in, then, Jason," put in David, "when you admit it's right to have a tariff against countries not on this continent?"

This bothered me a little, but I concluded the only answer should be what I counted the simple truth: "I don't know that it *is* just Christian," I said. "It isn't Christian, perhaps, to do something which will give work to a lot of people here,

where we are tolerably prosperous, and throw out of work the same number of people in another country, where, perhaps, they can't stand it so well. But there is a limit to how good we must be. If all the countries of all the world were to join together for free trade in everything, I believe it would be wise to go in for it, for trade could soon adjust itself to the general good of all the people in the world, everywhere. But if one or two countries of any importance hold out, we must at least protect ourselves and look out for our own people. That won't always be necessary. And it isn't at all necessary now as between Canada and the United States. Of course, if we went in together in the way I'd like to see, to be as prosperous as possible, Canada would have to join with us in what is done on the coast. Its people would have to stand with us in those matters in our dealings with the rest of the world. That would only be keeping up an arrangement already made by nature which put the ocean on each side of us."

Old man Mackenzie and John Cross, and even Alice and Mrs. Long, had come in by this time and the "head of the family," as David called her, made us all go back into the sitting-room, where she said we'd be more comfortable. She



said, too, that we could talk about the laws if we chose, because both she and Mrs. Long wanted to know more about them. . It might be useful even to the women folk, living on the line as we were. I've a notion that she was't very deeply interested, after all, but only wanted the rest of us to enjoy ourselves in any way we liked, and we smoked and talked on, and a great deal was said by all of us.

Jennison wasn't the least stubborn in the way he stood, but old man Mackenzie there was no moving. He had a mind of his own on most matters, surely, but when it came to laws already passed he didn't think; he was only solid as a rock. Whatever was done at Ottawa was right. I don't think it made much difference to him who was running the government at any time, or how different the plan of the party might be from that of the one which had gone out. He was just solid for the government. I know a good many like him on the Canadian side. They would be just as solid the other way if they'd happen to emigrate to this side of the line, and you can't help admiring their "sticktoitiveness," as David used to call it, though I have read somewhere that wise men sometimes change their opinions. These same sturdy Scotchmen made good fighters once, anyhow, and make very solid church members to-day.

John Cross did not say anything except once, when Jennison asked him what he thought, and then he only answered shortly that the thing was all wrong and that he didn't even want to talk about it. He was worse in the other direction than old man Mackenzie was in his.

It was sometime after we'd gone back into the sitting-room that Jennison said that if we did away with all duties between the United States and Canada it wouldn't be a great while before the idea would come up of joining the two countries closer still, and that the proposition would be for Canada to come into the United States.

"Well what of it," said David, who couldn't keep out of the discussion any longer, "I don't think it would come as you imagine, because there wouldn't be nearly so much left for either party to gain, then, and, besides, you have a lot of demagogues who talk 'nationalism' while we have a lot who talk 'British' and they would have their influence, for a time. If, however, some day, these two peoples should find it to their interest to join under one government why shouldn't they join? That is what governments are for, to secure the greatest good of the greatest number."

"And ye'd have us in with all your robberies of

the people and all your political scandals," said old man Mackenzie. "Na, man, it wouldn't do."

David laughed, "I don't think I'd say much about robbing the people or about political scandals. There was a time when Canada could boast, but that is past. We developed big rings first, it is true; we had our Credit Mobilier, our cross-continent railroad steals, and our scandals in office, but Canadian politicians have shown that we possessed only moderate genius, after all. Take the Canadian record of the last few years, and the consequent debt of the country, and we'll risk the comparison."

"You're not far off, there," said Jennison, "though I don't suppose I ought to admit it."

"But that doesn't matter," David went on, "we're not a race to allow political plundering to go more than about so far, and I think, no matter what is said, that things are getting better all the time in both countries. You've punished some of your rogues and we've punished some of ours and we'll each punish more of them. And if, some day, it should become the sentiment of both countries that it would pay to join them I say, 'Join'—but I don't believe it ought to come in any other way and I don't believe in agitating the question."

'Annexation' talk is nonsense. 'Annexation' isn't a good word and doesn't express the idea. 'Consolidation' would be better. But I do believe in doing away with this cursed tariff between the two countries, and I believe so, not because it hurts us here, but because, taking both countries together, it doesn't pay. It doesn't pay even the one which may get the best of it as compared with the other!" And he got very much in earnest.

And so we talked until it was time to separate and it was all on one subject, though all good-natured, for it couldn't well be anything else, after such a dinner as we'd had. I don't know why I should have told in such a drawn-out way about this rambling talk on something the average plain farming man is not supposed to know much about, but what had happened before made it the main thing in our minds, and I suppose it is so with me yet. So many things happened.

It had been a good afternoon and evening, anyway, and we had a great deal to be thankful for, after all. We were all well, even if we had been worried a little, and crops had been fair and there were the twins.

I dreamed, that night, that I was a turkey and that some bigger bird, with claws, was flying after

me, trying to get part of my feathers as duty. It was the hearty dinner, of course. And I wondered, if my good digestion couldn't stand so much eating, what John Cross must have dreamed!

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### LIGHT AND SHADE AGAIN.

They've sent me from the field, the hired boy,  
To bring more forks and rakes. There is no joy  
In what I am, because, upon the way,  
I see so many other things at play.

The sun shines hotly on the country road—  
The hard, white road, it burns my shoeless feet—  
There is no water where the brooklet flowed.

It is just noon. The downright shadows meet.

The yellow butterflies

Go criss-cross

Above the road of white,  
In drifting wayward flight.

Criss-cross

They go, the yellow butterflies,

Criss-cross.

Criss-cross

They go, the yellow butterflies.

There are too many of the things to count.

To where, each side, a strip of daisies lies

Close to the path, in flitting rises mount

The butterflies today;

Criss-cross.

Criss-cross

The growing heat is stifling. It is hot;

But heat appears to please these flying things,  
And I must hurry to the field. I've got  
Less time than have these idlers, with their wings.

Criss-cross.

The wavering shimmer hurts my blinktng eyes,

And yet the yellow butterflies

Go criss-cross

Above the burning road.

They have no load

And that is why

They fly

Criss-cross,

Criss-cross.

—*Where Summers Are.*

I wonder what the best way is in which to tell about a time of real happiness? I wish I knew. I wish I could tell the story of the six or eight months which followed that Thanksgiving dinner of ours. It would only be the home story of a tolerably big family on a farm, but I know it would be interesting and healthy.

Jennison went away right after the dinner, for he had been called back—I suppose he'd written some letter about the state of things, and so they'd thought there was no use in having him stay any longer—and there we were, with no one to look on at what we were doing. Jennison himself was a good fellow, and had never interfered with our

comfort much, because he had some common sense and a touch of fellow feeling in him, but it was good to have nobody around at all. As it had been all the time, we didn't want to do anything out of the way. We didn't want to do what wasn't lawful, but we did want to be let alone in living. We were decent people, and it seemed to be our right.

Before Jennison went away he dropped over to the place and said to me, who happened to be doing something outside the barn, that he'd come to bid us good-bye, and that he thought maybe it would be worth while to talk with me a minute or two first.

"I don't know much about it," he said. "I should imagine this the end of what has troubled you so—I mean with my going away—but there's a chance—mind I say only a chance—that there is more to come. I can't quite estimate what it is that our friend Gaherty and his associate, Vincent, can do. I don't know much about your American ways or what influence a couple like that might have, but I think it is all right."

And he told me what street he lived on, in Toronto, and said I must hunt him up if ever I came there.

We were just like other people now—we were



just like the farmers ten miles away from the line on either side. And it made us all comfortable, though it didn't really make much difference in what we did. We had nothing of any importance to move across the line in either way. We just settled down to doing the best things farmers could do for the stock and for the good of the whole two farms, which were one.

It was a good spring again, and one in which we tried to straighten up everything about the place, for we had got, by May, into the habit of laughing over what we called our old troubles, and of saying that maybe it had done us all good in teaching us patience and the laws. Even old man Mackenzie mellowed a little as the thing got to be not much more than a recollection, and was half inclined to allow that there was a good deal of machinery about governments, and that they sometimes did things just to make an example, when the people they so imposed upon were as law-abiding, so far as their intentions went, as any in the community. As for John Cross, he didn't brighten up quite as much as I hoped he would under the circumstances. He was almost as gloomy and ugly as he was that morning when I talked with him in the orchard after the frozen rain, and as desperate of mind. He

was just as dyspeptic and sallow of face as ever—more so, it seemed to me—and as terribly in earnest, in his strange way:

“They’ll be back here!” he said, “mind that; and there’ll be murder done yet”!

I laughed and thought no more of it. Who could think anything of the sayings of a dyspeptic hired man when things were going so well! Alice alone was enough to make any man glad just to look at her. She got stronger and almost ruddy, and handsome in all ways. I’d never appreciated until our troubles were gone how much they had affected her, on David’s account. I might have known that she was fretting over whatever bothered him, but I never thought of it much. Now I could see. She became the brightest and the most wholesome and happiest of women. She was so glad all the time that it seemed to affect everybody else. We men folk were in good humor, of course—all except John Cross. Mrs. Long and Lucinda Briggs were as happy as Alice was.

The twins probably had something to do with the situation, for they were a wonderful pair, surely, and would do a great deal toward making a father and mother happy, but I guess it was the general swing of things that made the most of it.

We were not bothered; we were healthy and hearty and working hard, and breathing pure air and not annoyed by anything outside, and that is what makes people all right.

So it went along into the summer, up to the time of about the twins' first birthday. Now came another good and right and pleasant thing, for another baby was born to Alice and David—a little girl this time. There wasn't any summer thunder storm when this youngster came into the world, and it was all a matter of course with these two awfully venerable old married people, David and Alice. And that girl baby was, if I am any judge, as fine a baby as either of the twins. She was just as sweet a small, silly, little blinking bit of meat and bones and eyes as you could find. The general conclusion of the household was that she was about right.

It was one of your yellow summers. I never saw so many butterflies and humming-birds before. There were clouds, of course, but they didn't last, and the yellow of the sun would slip by them every day, and crawl and spread and glorify over everything. We were in good humor all the time, and ready to enjoy anything that was worth it. I know that I found something worth looking at one day

when I went up to the house about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, after something—I forget what now.

I went in and called but nobody answered and then I went through the rooms, because I was rather in a hurry and was just like one of the family. I couldn't find anybody. Finally I got into the wing and, at first, there didn't seem to be anyone there, either, but I was mistaken. There were three very important people there and I'm glad I found them so that day, for the picture is a good one to be remembered by a man when he gets old and wants to go back into memory and turn over the bright leaves. What I saw was this:

I saw three young ones. Something had called out the women folk just then and, for a few minutes, the house didn't have anyone in it but the babies and the man who had just come in accidentally. It was something, that, though I'm not much given to this sentimental memorizing sort of business, I shan't forget all my life. There was the bed with all its cleanness and whiteness and the pillows at the top. Piled up close together against the pillows were those two pirates, the twins. They'd got pretty rugged, by this time, pretty noisy and adventurous and daring on their wobbly, red legs and were as taking a couple of

young villains as you can imagine. They were sturdy for their age but they were such a plunging pair of young men that the legs of them and all the rest of their system generally gave out a trifle in the afternoon and they wanted a little sleep to average up things. When I went into the wing these two were at the top of the bed and the blessed little new thing was at the bottom lying, not with just her head on a pillow, but on it the whole of her, still as a little flower.

The twins had been put on the bed with some idea that they would sleep with their heads on the pillows, as least so I judged from appearance, but they hadn't stayed where they were put. They had wriggled and wobbled down and when I found them they were lying close together, very near the middle of the bed.

It was plain enough that Alice, before she had gone away, had been dealing with the children all together. The baby had gone to sleep readily enough, as babies do, but the twins, the young reprobates, hadn't gone to sleep so easily. And so Alice had let them take their time and had gone out and got them something to play with. She'd brought them from the garden a lot of big red roses.

There they were, the two owners of all the

world, as far as they knew, and the owners of a good deal of it in reality in our immediate locality, as all of us were willing to acknowledge, and both of them tight asleep and neither of them observing any of the laws of ordinary propriety. One of them had twisted round until he was stretched across the other in a free and easy way and their fat legs were all tangled up. And all about them and held in their pudgy hands were the red roses. It was as pretty a picture as you can think of. They were so sturdy and so fat and so tight asleep and mixed up and so accidentally decked out by the lot of flowers all about them. And at the other end of the bed, on the pillow, lay the young lady who had come to add a queen to the kingdom. The two boys might be sprawled criss-cross like two young woodchucks, but not she; she lay straight and still and all covered up with her long dress, as a young person of her standing in the community should. She lay on the pressed-in pillow like a pearl on a shell. She made me think of an old negro minstrel song I'd heard once:

*"Nelly was a lady."*

I was standing there looking at the babies when I heard voices and stepped out on the wing veranda

to see who it was and to tell what it was I wanted. I'd made a mistake, though, and those who were talking were not out in the yard but coming through the house into the wing. I turned back to meet them and saw David and Alice come into the room together. They stopped rather suddenly and looked down at the babies on the bed. Neither of them said anything but they turned and looked into each other's eyes. Then she came up a little closer to him and he put his arm about her and they stood there and looked down again together on the youngsters. I didn't know what to do. There I was standing, holding the door in my hand and looking at them. I thought I would slip away but I was afraid to make any noise. So I stood still. They looked at the babies for a second or so and then David drew Alice up close to him and looked into her face and smiled, though he didn't say anything; then he let her off a little again and then drew her up close and kissed her. He let her go then and she stood beside him and they both looked down once more at the babies. He put his hand on her shoulder and spoke to her:

"My love, my good wife, isn't it wonderful! There are we, just we! We loved and became one, and from us is a part of the world and what



will make the world. Oh my resolute, faithful Canadian girl, it seems as if we couldn't be thankful enough. I suppose our children are like other children, but it doesn't seem so. And it's all you; it's all the dear heart who came to me and helped me make what there is here, all this part of the world. You, the woman of it, make it all. Dear,——"

"I'll not tell you all he said, because I don't believe that would be right. I don't believe that quite all the words said in this world should be told again by anybody. I wouldn't repeat for thousands what Alice said. I only know that I got desperate and let the door go and slipped away and went out of sight of the wing. I sat down and thought of it. It was so good. But in the midst of it came the thought of what I might have been and done myself and a great bitterness came into my mind. There might have been some woman in the world, the right one, too, for me. It was all because I hadn't started out right. I'd drifted in the wrong, small way and had lived my little early life and done things which could not be easily undone. I'd thought of the days when I was a boy in the country and might have gone in a bigger way, somehow. I could see the old place where



I was born again and see myself carrying rakes or pitchforks down the bare, hot country road and resolving in my mind that I would not be that way always; something to carry things and work, like a horse or an ox. I used to envy the butterflies and the birds in those young days. But I grew up as the other boys and did just as all the rest of them.

I'd made my failure of a home life and was now only the hired man who had looked on, accidentally. There came a great lump in my throat and, for a time, I hadn't any good sense.

Then I braced up and thought more of myself. I thought of all there is to it, anyway, and that there is a good deal in trying to be helpful even if you'd lost the chance for having what is best in this odd life of ours. After all, the man who not only tries pretty hard to laugh but who does laugh and who has a heart in him is tolerably good commodity, and I said to myself that I'd keep on being what I'd tried to be for years. That helped the lump in my throat. And I made up my mind I'd stand by Alice and David right along. I was a kind of half father, half brother to the couple, and they counted on me. How could I do better than just to stay by them? They were worth it and it would give me something to think of and work for.

And this yellow summer went right on and we had got at the end of the hay cutting and were as comfortable and happy a lot of people about our house as you would find in seven counties. There was every prospect for good crops and a profitable clean-up in the Fall, and David told his father-in-law that he didn't think much of notes and mortgages, anyhow, that they were things to be wiped away easily enough, and the old man was as delighted as was David over the state of things. Then, one day, I got a letter.

The letter was from Jennison. He said he was coming again. He said he didn't know just why, but he'd been ordered to look after us again and that he didn't think that in telling of it he was doing anything very wrong though it was decidedly unofficial. Of course, he said, there was only one explanation, Vincent and Gaherty were at the bottom of it. And, within a week after I got that letter, both men were in their old places again, watching us.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE WATER SNAKES.

He broods over things that are all unseen,  
But he knows there are things to fear,  
And he stalks about with a watchful mien,  
And his step is soft and his eye is keen;  
There is Something very near.

He would like to grapple with what is there  
Could he reach it with his hands;  
He stretches them out—and feels the air—  
But the dread of Something has still to bear;  
It will come. He understands!

*—In the Darkness.*

Nothing happened at first. It seems as if nothing ever did happen as you expect when you are looking for it all the time; but that made none of us any more comfortable—we were brooding and apprehensive, because we somehow felt that this particular visitation meant business. David laughed, as usual, but to my ear the laugh didn't have the old careless ring, and even old Mackenzie began to grumble a little at what he called "official interference wi' the ways o' decent citi-

zens." Alice was troubled, too—I could see that—and worried over the manner in which David might be affected.

All this seems a great fuss over a small matter. All there was to fret over was the fact that two customs officers were watching the people on our farm to see that they didn't do any smuggling, and one wouldn't think that anything very serious. But I've told all that led up to this condition of things, and to this special visit, and it may be understood why we were so affected now. It broke again into a life that was becoming peaceful and settled and happy. We had fallen into such a feeling of rest and satisfaction that to go back to the old, unsettled way was a shock, even to me.

I'm a pretty sturdy and steady old fellow, and a little dull, maybe, but I'm willing to admit that I felt now almost something of the feeling of John Cross, something as a rat may feel when it is thrown into a glass case with a snake—I've seen such things in a menagerie—and knows it isn't going to have a fair show. Sometimes it gets desperate—instead of a live snake with a dead rat inside it, there's a dead snake with a live rat outside, and that isn't profitable for the showman.

In our case, though, the snake was too big. A rat cannot kill a couple of the biggest boa-constrictors in the world.

I don't know why I should think of snakes or talk of them in telling of what happened at this time, save that Gaherty, with his silent, gliding ways, always made me think of one, and that an incident took place about this time in which snakes figured, though only accidentally. I had nothing in particular to do one afternoon, and I concluded to go over to the east field and see if the fences were up and things generally as they should be. I had to cross the creek, but didn't turn off to reach the place where we had a long plank laid across where the banks were high, for at this time of year, of course, the water was low, and you could jump the narrow stream at almost any place you chose. There were little ponds, though, here and there along its course, which were wider, and I happened to come up close beside one of these. Looking off toward the road just then, I saw dimly through the bushes a man coming along whom I thought was Gaherty, and I concluded to sit down beside the pond out of sight behind a clump of willows and keep an eye on him. As it happened, it wasn't Gaherty at all, but some stranger who

chanced to be going across the country. I wasn't in any hurry, though, and so sat still there on a stone, chewing a dry timothy stalk, which is a great habit of mine, and thinking of nothing special.

The water in the pond was muddy, as might be expected at the season, and perfectly still except as skippers ran across it or a fish came up to breathe and there was a little burst of yellow bubbles. In July the fish in the creek, the minnows and bullheads and shiners and small cat-fish and the young pickerel and suckers, all gather in these pools, and there wait the fall floods. A pretty hard time they must have of it, too, for the shitepoke, that small, greenish heron seen in all northern lowlands, has them almost at his mercy, and I think coons and water-snakes get them occasionally.

It is very pleasant, when one isn't hurried, to sit idly and look upon a creek-pond in summer. It is a little world all by itself, in which a thousand things are happening. At night it must be a world in which there are tragedies and, even in the daytime, if one keeps as still as a stump or stone and makes no sign, he may see many curious things. I sat there dreaming and "took it all in," as the boys say nowadays. Right across from me, in the

rank grass on the other side, rose two stalks of Indian tobacco blooms, just like the cone-shaped hyacinths in the garden, but with a color which you do not know whether to call a scarlet-crimson or a crimson-scarlet, so deep and yet so vivid is its red. The blossoms made the place a little brighter, and it rather needed some such assistance.

Between the rank grass and the water was a sloping, muddy space three or four feet wide, showing from where the water had receded, and it was all marked and criss-crossed with the tracks of such creatures as make the creek their haunt. There was the print of the crane's claws and the tracks, which looked like those of a baby, made by the coon, and the two pads, as if a kitten had put two of its feet down close together, of the mink, and the larger, splotchy mark of the muskrat. It could be seen that a great deal of business was done in the neighborhood of this particular pond. I felt sorry for the clams—if there were any left—buried under that gray ooze, and for the fish so imprisoned until the rains came.

There was a droning, for all the air was full of insects of the season, and I was feeling almost drowsy despite the curious things before me, when my eye rested upon a bunch of drift-wood which



had collected at the pond's lower end. In the spring all manner of wood is caught up by the freshet as it spreads over the flats, and is sucked in gradually as the waters fall toward the bed of the creek. Much of this wood is carried downward to get into the lower streams, to reach the lake, maybe, at last, and finally sink sodden to its bottom, but some is caught by bushes and retained, and so along the lower end and side of any creek-pond, in midsummer, are collected these gray platforms of broad chips and slabs of bark. It was upon one of these platforms that I had noticed something. I looked more closely, and saw what is to me the most repulsive object in the world.

Once, when I was a boy, running across a field one day with a rake in my hand, I used the handle just as a vaulting-pole is used, and when I came to a creek I had to cross, I plunged the pole down and leaped over. While in mid-air, just in the very act of flying over the creek, I saw where I must alight, and there coiled and twisted and vile was a mass of water-snakes. I could not check myself. I screamed as I came down. My bare feet crushed upon those cold, slimy things, and I pitched forward beyond them, almost in a fit. I rose in a moment and saw the snakes, which had



slipped into the water—all save one whose back I had broken—and when I had recovered my senses tried to kill them all. I guess I did. And since that time I've had a sort of horror of these "water-pilots," as some folks call them, the dirtiest-looking and the meanest snakes in North America.

Upon the drift-wood, at the lower edge of the pond beside which I was sitting, lay coiled and sunning themselves just such another mass of water-snakes as I had come down upon so many years ago. I try to be good to all God's creatures. I remember a poem I read once, called "The Ancient Mariner," in which the man who was in trouble was saved because he blessed some snakes which were following the belated ship, in which he was all alone among the dead men; but, somehow, I can't quite bring myself down to snakes. They seem apart from all the other things that live and move, and to be something dreadful. So I kill a snake whenever I see one. Most of us have an instinct that way, and I suppose God didn't implant it in us for nothing. Besides, the Bible says we shall always "bruise the serpent," or something like that. Anyhow I got up softly and found a stone weighing about four pounds and tip-toed along the bank until I was pretty near the

spot where that lot of water-snakes lay coiled up on the drift-wood. I peered over, and there they were, a nasty lump of them. I calculated the thing nicely, and then, putting all my strength into it, I let that stone go at the mass.

I was always a pretty good hand with a club or stone and I didn't miss this time. That piece of rock smashed right down through the heap of snakes and I don't believe there was one in the lot, so coiled together were they, that didn't get his back broken somewhere and was so done for. I watched what was still animate among them heave and toss itself into the water, a tangle of repulsiveness, and, as I did so, I heard a chuckle behind me:

"That's right! Let's kill all snakes!"

I jumped as if I'd been shot. There, standing close beside me, was John Cross. He'd come up over the field so softly that I never heard him and had seen me kill the snakes. He was chuckling still as I wheeled round.

I was almost in a passion. "What do you mean," I said, "by slipping up on a man that way and scaring him out of a year's growth? It may be funny to you but it isn't to the other fellow!"

John Cross didn't seem much affected by what

I said. "You got your growth long ago," he answered, "and as for scaring you, I didn't think anything about it. I came up quietly, because it is a habit I've got into lately not to make any noise. Don't you think it better not to make any noise?" he asked in a queer sort of way.

I told him I didn't think it was necessary to creep about so on our own place and when we were liable to startle one another, but he paid no attention to that. And he was looking worse than ever.

He had looked so bad before, as I have said so often, that I didn't suppose he could look worse but I found that I was mistaken. I hadn't noticed him much of late, but of course this called my attention to him anew. I don't believe the man would have weighed over a hundred pounds, he had got so thin and his face had got more and more of that queer color which there is no name for but which makes you think of something not alive nor healthy. His cheek bones and the bones of the points of his jaws were sharper and I felt mighty sorry for him. I knew that he must be living a sort of life that wasn't really living and I didn't wonder that his mind was inclined in a brooding way. I asked him about his stomach, but he didn't answer me. He was full of some-

thing else. "I liked to see you kill the snakes. Let's kill 'em, all," he said again.

"But I think I've killed about all of 'em already. That stone went down through the very middle of the heap. There are none left to kill."

"Oh, yes, there are! All the snakes aren't along the creek. There's land snakes as well as water-snakes and the land snakes are worse."

"But there aren't a dozen bad ones left on the farm. The mowing-machine has finished most of them. I haven't seen a rattlesnake this year and only one or two black snakes, and the ones I saw I finished."

His eyes were glittering and he looked almost like a snake himself as he answered me:

"All snakes ain't in the grass. Some snakes walk. And all snakes ought to be killed!"

I told him I thought he was wandering in his mind, and tried to soothe him but he only got more excited. "There are snakes to be killed, I tell you!" he shouted. "You kill your snakes, and I'll kill mine!"

He stared at me a minute and then, mumbling out something about work he had to do, started off walking very fast. Pretty soon he changed his gait to a run and went over the fence like a deer,

keeping up his run after he got into the road. I wondered and was sorry and felt thankful that my own stomach wasn't out of kelter.

## CHAPTER XX.

### NEARING A CLIMAX

And blood is thicker than water, they say;  
Then blood is a thing to be dreaded  
When it goes to the brain in a blinding way  
And brothers become dull-headed;  
When it stays in the head while the heart is drained  
And thought is full of quibbles,  
And the link of brotherhood is strained  
And wisdom comes in dribbles!

—*Recollections of Morgenstein.*

Days passed, and we still heard nothing and saw but little of either Gaherty or Jennison. Some of us caught a glimpse of Gaherty once in a while about Vincent's place, and Jennison, strolling by, once or twice called out to me and asked how things were going, but did not speak of that which he must have known was of most interest to all of us. He seemed careful of what he said, though; I suppose it was only because he felt bothered and, in a way, embarrassed. I didn't quite understand this at the time, but I did later. As for Gaherty, he never came any nearer us than to

walk by a few times, looking neither to the right nor the left and speaking to nobody. What he did at night I don't know. He may have suspected us of all sorts of things, and have been lurking under our very windows. But in the daytime he was not in sight much. As I have said, though, it didn't relieve us—we were full of apprehensions, and we learned that we had reason to be so one day when Lucinda Briggs went out to feed the calf.

It was a remarkably fine calf, one of the best we'd ever had on the farm—a Durham cross—to which Lucinda Briggs was devoting her attention this year. The cattle had been mostly pastured on the American side after the hay-cutting, but this calf was in the field over the line, just opposite the house, the same one which the year before had the tomato patch in the corner, where the hens used to idle round before they crossed the road to visit the wonderful nests among the currant bushes. The calves were put in this field so they could be fed from either side, John Cross' wife sometimes attending to the duty when Lucinda Briggs was too busy, as, for instance, on wash-days. There was a gate in the fence just opposite our house, and through this Lucinda would go with her pail of milk for the calf. She went with hesitation, too, some days.

Well, it happened that one afternoon, about six o'clock, Lucinda went across the road with the usual pail of skim milk for the calf. That animal chanced to be on the other side of the field at the time, and when Lucinda began to call it bellowed eagerly, as calves will when hungry and with food in sight, and, lifting up its rope of a tail, came charging across the field at as fierce a run as its clumsy legs could accomplish. Now it so happened that Lucinda had undergone a sad experience with that same calf only an evening or two before. She had not realized before how big and strong it had got, and when it had chanced to come so with a rush, had waited it fearlessly. It had dived at the pail of milk as it came up, and over had gone Lucinda, pail and all. She came back to the house for more milk, wet as could be and all tousled and dusty, and pretty well shaken up. She had learned to respect that calf.

On the evening I now tell of, as the calf came tearing at her, Lucinda weakened. She waited until it got pretty near and then screamed and ran back through the gate and across the road toward our house again. She did not start quite soon enough. She should have fled earlier, or else had sense enough to close the gate behind her as she



ran. The calf rushed through and caught her just as she neared the gate on the American side. It dived at the pail and Lucinda went down just as she had done before. She rose up, yelling, of course, as she always did in an emergency, and then she saw something which quieted her all at once.

What she saw was only Gaherty on the opposite side of the street, closing the gate through which she and the calf had just come. Lucinda stood stock still, her eyes and mouth wide open, watching the man much as they say a bird watches a rattlesnake, for, to her mind, Gaherty was something awful—something which was an enemy, but powerful and wonderfully interesting, so interesting that she almost forgot to be afraid in watching. The man did not notice her at all. He closed the gate tightly, even putting the wooden pin through the rough staple so that the thing couldn't open again until someone did it carefully, and then he went a little to the east and picked up a short stick he found there and came up and hit the calf, which was still rooting around eagerly where the pail of milk had been spilled, and so drove it off galloping to the west. As it plunged away westward he ran around and headed it off to the south,

and it blundered along until it got opposite Vincent's place. Lucinda followed, still all dazed, until she had turned the corner and could see what happened.

The calf would only run a little way ahead and then wait until Gaherty came up and drove it on. When it stopped opposite Vincent's house the man did not attempt to drive it any further but kept it from coming back toward our place, while he called for Vincent. That sneaking brute came out at last and opened the gate to his barnyard and then the two of them drove the calf in and finally drove it even into the cow stable and closed the doors. Then, when she had seen that, Lucinda Briggs started home on a run.

Feeding the calf was one of the things Lucinda did just before supper, so that we were all gathered in the house when she burst in upon us. She was white in the face and, at first, couldn't talk very well. She only gasped. We knew something serious to her had happened but we were so used to her ways that we didn't know whether the barn was afire or whether she'd found that a hawk had killed a hen. So we only laughed.

Lucinda found her voice, though, finally and managed to tell her story, and we were all sober

then. We knew that trouble had begun again, though in a way that was almost ridiculous. We knew that a calf brought across the line accidentally had been seized for violation of the revenue laws. Gaherty had happened along, and seeing his opportunity, with only a woman to oppose him, had improved it in his cowardly way. Was he right, or had he made some such mistake as he did the night he caught Lucinda with the eggs? That was what bothered us. We got out the books, the American blue bound one and the Canadian pamphlet with the yellow cover, and sat down to study the thing out.

"I believe he's got us," David said, finally, "not rightly, of course, but in a tricky way. The law says that you can't bring cattle across from Canada unless you pay \$10.00 on grown cattle and \$2.00 a head on any under a year old. Why didn't you tie \$2.00 to the calf, Lucinda, so that it could pay for its passage whenever you ran away from it?"

Lucinda Briggs, not understanding the joke, didn't make any answer, only staring at David and looking troubled. He pacified her, saying that she had done nothing wrong, and then we considered the books again. We couldn't find anything to comfort us.

Lucinda had brought the calf across the line, and though it was all an accident and a ridiculous one, we knew that Gaherty had a case on us. We knew that, from what he and Vincent must have reported, we should stand at headquarters as a hard lot, and that the bringing over of the calf would only be counted as a sharp trick of ours, and that we'd lose it unless we paid the \$2.00, and might lose it anyhow. We'd got rather fond of that calf. It was a fine cross and was intended to match another calf David had found on the American side and had bought to be delivered as soon as it had done with milk. He had a neatly matched pair of big oxen in mind. At last David came to a decision:

"It grits me, Jason," he said, "but I don't think there's any other way but to pay the \$2.00 if we want the calf back again. I'm afraid, the way I feel now, that I shouldn't be very patient, or very wise, talking to Gaherty. Will you attend to it all? Will you see the fellow in the morning and take over the \$2 00 and bring the calf back?"

I said I'd go over, but, in my own mind, I thought I shouldn't be any better than David. I was getting pretty mad myself. Besides, I wasn't by any means sure that \$2.00 would get the calf.

I thought over the matter a good deal as I lay in bed that night and I couldn't see my way clear at all. So far as the calf was concerned, I felt that it didn't cut much of a figure, though I'll own up that I was bothered over the prospect of losing the young brute. A prettier match I'd never seen than that calf would make with the one David had arranged to buy, and people in the country get a great deal of satisfaction out of a well-matched pair of oxen. I don't know that they are any better for being alike in markings, that they work together any more fairly or are better in any way, but it is a country fancy which has weight and a matched yoke brings more money than another. So I was troubled, but I consoled myself with the reflection that though the calves were almost just alike now, they might grow up different from each other. One might get stunted and the other big, or one might keep all his spots and color and the other lose them. It often happens that way with growing cattle. This idea made me a little more contented, as far as the calf was concerned. It didn't help me about the general situation. I knew that the bother over the calf meant but the beginning of trouble that was bound to be serious in the end. It was all very well to laugh and to

count this but an affair of a calf, but that was not all it meant. Still, I made up my mind I would do my best in the morning.

I dreamed about Gaherty and calves that night and woke in an uncomfortable condition. The sun was streaming in at my window, though, and, somehow, that always helps a fellow, and by the time I'd doused myself with cold water and had a good breakfast, I felt reasonably well fixed for meeting Gaherty and learning, if I could, how things were. I didn't like to go to Vincent's place, but there was no way out of it. So I went there.

I banged away at the front door and Mrs. Vincent, a pale, harmless sort of woman, let me in.

I said I wanted to see Mr. Gaherty and presently he came. Some of his sneaking look was gone for a time. I've noticed that it always goes from mean men when they feel that they have the advantage for the moment. They look more like real men then, though it doesn't come from the proper consciousness of what makes a man and makes him respect himself, no matter how things may be going.

The man nodded to me and sat down in a chair. I wasn't asked to do the same thing, but I sat

down, too, for I felt that I didn't amount to much if I wasn't as good as he. "You drove off a calf of ours yesterday," I said; "will you be kind enough to tell me what it was for?"

He grinned as he answered me: "Bringing cattle from Canada into the United States. Tariff, \$10.00 a head on grown cattle and \$2.00 a head on anything under a year old; so I seized the calf."

"But," I said, "that calf wasn't really brought over at all. It belongs on the Canadian side. It only chased across after the girl who went to feed it. She couldn't help that, though, maybe, she ought to have closed the gate after her. You surely can't call that smuggling cattle across the line."

The fellow scowled. "I only know that I saw a calf brought across the line and that I seized it, as is my duty to do when the tariff is not met. I'm up to your tricks. And there's another thing, only a little thing, that must be settled. You've brought milk from Canada into the United States."

"That isn't so" I said; "our cows are not on the Canadian side, just now."

"I didn't say they were. I said you'd been bringing milk here from Canada. The woman who smuggled the calf over had a pail of milk with her.



There was at least a gallon of it and the duty is five cents."

"But that was only the skim milk she'd just carried across for the calf. It was American milk and there's no duty on milk going into Canada, anyhow."

Gaherty only laughed: "I saw it come from the other side."

I needn't say that this made me about as irritated as a man could be with anything small and contemptible. Here was this man knowing as well as I did, that there was nothing wrong, no idea of violating the custom laws in all that happened with the calf or milk, or in the trouble of poor Lucinda Briggs; yet he was trying to make us wrong in the eyes of the government and to bring to us a lot of annoyance and expense. A nice condition of affairs on the line between two people of the same blood! I was on the point of breaking out and saying what I shouldn't have done, when I reflected that this fellow wouldn't care and that the best I could do was to be as shrewd and conciliatory as I knew how.

"We won't talk about the milk," I said. "I came over only about the calf. I know what the tariff on calves is, and, though it is all wrong, we



are willing to pay the \$2.00 to get that calf back. Here it is and I'll take the calf back with me."

Gaherty laughed again then, wickedly: "You can't have that calf for \$2 00," he answered; "it's seized. You can't get off that way."

I didn't know what to say. I was foolish, I guess, when I did speak, for it had nothing to do with the calf.

"I'm an older man than you and not much heavier. Will you come out into the road with me for five minutes?"

He only glared and said he didn't want any of my impertinence and walked out of the room, hurrying a little as he got near the door. As for me, I could only go home and tell David all about it.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### AT CLOSE QUARTERS.

The roadbed's rough—there is no doubt of that—

In better shape by far it ought to be,  
And yet the toll is high, and getting fat  
And bloated is the old monopoly.

Remorseless, grasping, now, as in the past,  
Upon each journey made it must befall  
That we are taxed: it comes to this at last:  
We pay the fee or travel not at all!

We may not go where pleasure-gardens lie  
But Wasted Time demands a greedy rate,  
Nor where full appetites we'd gratify  
But Illness stands relentless at the gate.

We may not even from the highway stray  
Nor go afield to pluck a passion-flower  
Ere settlement with Conscience by the way  
We make perforce, for we are in her power.

Shall we rebel? Wherein would be the good?

They hold a charter, the oppressors say—  
A charter which has all attacks withstood,  
And which expires but on the judgment day,

It may be so, but grudging is our dole;  
It may be so, but hard it is to see  
These grim gate-keepers stand and take their toll  
Along the highways of eternity.

—*The Tax-Gatherers.*

I suppose it falls to all of us to endure a great deal in this wicked world. We can't help that; we have to pay the piper continually, no matter what sort of life we lead, but sometimes I think the assessor is hardly fair in his figures. Surely, we well-meaning people were having rather a hard time of it.

I found David; I talked with him, and was in a way puzzled by the manner in which he acted. He seemed almost heavy and dull about it, and not caring much. I couldn't understand it at the time, but later, when I had a chance to think it over, I could see how it was that he, who had most at stake, must have worried and fretted over the whole business for a year or two, and that, whatever his listlessness or his apathy now, it must be the outcome of the long strain and trial, and that he had only wearied of facing a stronger force on unfair grounds. I told him about Gaherty and the calf, and thought he would get mad and try at once to think of some way of getting even, but he did not seem to care. All he had to say was that we must do the best we could, and that maybe we could come out all right. I thought he would call in the town constable and make some sort of effort to get the calf back, and I told him

so, but he only laughed and said we could not "replevin" things from the national government. He seemed wearied of the whole thing, and I must say I half agreed with him in the feeling. We had done our best; we had tried to do right, but we had been hunted too sharply and were nearly "tuckered out," as they say in the country when they are tired.

David had simply nothing to advise. "If Gaherty won't give up the calf," he said, "there is nothing for us to do but let it go. We are not strong enough to make any fight. All we can do is to knuckle down. I suppose we might make a struggle, and I could get all the friends I have to help me, and maybe there would be a reversal of the seizure some time, and then the calf would have cost two or three hundred dollars. There's nothing to do."

I didn't argue with him; there was no use in that. I went away gritting my teeth, and not over-satisfied with it all. I didn't believe in doing anything foolish, but I didn't want to see that fellow Gaherty having it all his own way. I was in this mood, vexed and rather vengeful, when I met John Cross again and told him all about the calf. He'd been at work on his end of the farm,

and before this didn't even know that the calf had been seized. He would hardly believe me at first, but when it finally dawned upon him that hostilities had actually opened again, his face began to twitch, and I could see that he was much affected. He said not a word, but went away, walking slowly with his head down.

It was about 3 o'clock on the afternoon of the very day when I had seen Gaherty and then talked with David and, later still, met John Cross, when, as I was working in the barn, I heard a great racket down the road. I ran out, and there saw that the gate across the way, through which the calf had come the day before, was open again, and that in the middle of the road just east of it, stood our Alice. To see our sweet young mother there—she with all her dignity and quiet ways—was a surprise which would have made me stand stock still if there had been nothing else to note. But that was not all. Of course it was not Alice who had made the noise, and of course it was Lucinda Briggs. There she was, about twenty rods up the road, dashing about and waving her apron and screaming, while just ahead of her, and bobbing about and trying to get past her and back, was the calf which had been the cause of so much trouble!

And away in the distance, up at the corners across from Vincent's place, I could see John Cross coming down toward us at a run. I couldn't understand it all, and stood still, wondering what would happen. And something happened very soon.

The calf, tired all at once of being headed off by Lucinda, came tearing down the road toward Alice. It would have passed her, but, imitating Lucinda, she waved her apron at it, and it stopped and looked about, bewildered. Then, seeing the gate open, and no doubt recognizing its old quarters, it made a dive into the field, and when it had done so Alice ran up and closed the gate and put in the wooden pin. We had the calf again!

She turned from the gate; as she did so she saw me looking at her, and her face became as red, almost, as one of the peonies in our front yard. "O, Jason," she stammered out, and was starting across to explain something about it all—when there was a rush of footsteps, from the east this time, and Gaherty came running up and caught her fiercely by the arm and whirled her about and roared out hoarsely:

"You!—you'll interfere with the government, will you! Open that gate and let that calf out! Quick!"

I've been angered a good many times in my life—not so often as the average man, maybe, for I'm pretty cool, and I don't like a row of any sort—but I never knew before what it was to feel murderous! I can remember even now, in a queer sort of way, what happened to me in that moment. I felt tears come suddenly in my eyes and run down my cheeks, and I felt every muscle and nerve in my clumsy body stiffen and tauten, while my teeth came together so that I could hear them grate. I leaned forward, braced. In another moment I would have been across the road and upon the man who was clutching the arm of our dear frightened girl, and once there, I don't know what I would have done. I should have killed him, I fear. I should have taken in my hands the cowardly dog who could so hurt a woman, and I should have just jammed him down on that summer-dried road. I should have fumbled around until my right hand got hold of his throat and the thumb on one side and the fingers on the other had got in behind and around his wind-pipe, and then I should have squeezed that close until it was a mere flabby thing, like the cast-off skin of a snake, while, with that grip, I pounded his head up and down on the road's hard surface until his eyeballs bulged forth

and his foul-speaking tongue protruded from his mouth. I don't know; I know only of the spirit that possessed me then, and of the thoughts that flashed through my brain, as it were, in a single second. I've read somewhere that when a man is drowning there comes to him in a moment a recollection of all the gravest things he has done in all his life. I suppose it's all some fancy of the writers or some legend that has grown up, but somehow there does—as I have known ever since that moment—come to a man swiftly, in an emergency, a sort of back view of himself. A lot of things came to me, and then I forgot about it all, and knew only that my muscles were stiff and that there was Gaherty, and that he was hurting our Alice. All this was in an instant. I plunged ahead—but I was too late, and I've thanked God for it!

As I started, there was a crash beside me, a little to the left, where the gate opened from our side into the road. The gate was not a very heavy one; it was light and made to swing easily, and was of half-inch pine. There was a rush of feet, a smash and splintering, a big man went by me like lightning, and came down upon the one who was clutching Alice. It was David. He had come



from out the fields to the south, and had seen the man in the road lay hands upon his wife. That was enough—that one instant's glance—to transform a peaceable, well-intentioned man, one with a full regard for the powers that be, into something fierce and dreadful as a savage wild beast. What could stop him! No fumbling at a gate-latch for him then! He had hurled himself through those pine boards and there he was upon the cruel and unmannerly thing with the woman.

It was all over in a moment. As David leaped down upon Gaherty he seized him with both hands and tore him away and swirled him about, and then just "slatted" him, as they say, down toward the fence and upon the ground. Gaherty went like a mere clod of something, and fairly curled and quivered as he struck. And then, with a roar, like a wild beast again, David ran at the fence on the other side and tore off the light white-ash top-rail and whirled it about his head to bring it down upon the half-senseless, quaking being at the roadside.

It was well that I, who had got half way across the road before David rushed by me, had regained now some trifle of my sense. It was well that some sudden glimmering of reason went through my mind, and made me act swiftly. I

don't know what made me do it—I was crazy-mad myself—but I caught David's arms as the rail whirled aloft, and as it came down it was swerved aside from what it was aimed for, and broke and splintered upon the hardened roadway.

David gripped me before he thought, but, as our faces came together, he seemed to realize something, and stopped suddenly and let me go. He stood still there, an odd, choking sound coming from his throat, and then reached out his arms toward Alice, who came into them, crying softly. The man on the ground was recovering now, and raised his head. I laid my hand on David's arm and asked him to go to the house with Alice. He looked at me as if he were dazed, and so stood for a little time, and then, putting his arm around the woman, drew her away toward our own gate. He had nearly reached the gate when he took his arm away from her and came stalking back; not fast, but with a look on his face I didn't like. Gaherty had raised himself partly up, and as he did so I had put my arm under his and raised him to his feet. He was not hurt dangerously anywhere, but he was not just himself. It seemed to me as if every bone in his body must have cracked when David hurled him down. He stood there so as David came back with something deadly in his eyes.

It was not quite murder, though. There had come some self-control to the maddened man, though his face was dreadful. He came up and stood before Gaherty and began talking, though his voice sounded strange:

“Do you know, that you—that—that you touched Her! Do you know it! And here you are, alive, now! It’s wrong! it’s all wrong! You touched Her, and here you are, alive! I’ll kill you!”

He was quivering all over, while the thing before him was shaking in mortal terror. Gaherty had so recovered that he knew where he was, and the awful peril he was in at that moment. I was frightened myself at first, but I had regained all such little sense as I owned naturally by this time, and I took David by the arm and pushed him away. He looked in my face again and seemed to understand, and turned back to Alice and put his arm about her once more, and so they went away, finally, to the house.

I stood there alone with Gaherty. His clothes were dirty from the rasping way in which he had been thrown down upon the road; his face was white and a little blood was trickling from his nose. He was a solid sort of fellow, else he would never have recovered so soon from that fearful

smashing down upon the dried ground. It was not his bruised and bloody look, though, that struck me: it was the devilish expression of his countenance. If ever hate and a fierce, currish desire for revenge showed in human features it was in the face of Gaherty as he stood there looking at David and Alice as they went up toward the house.

Finally I spoke:

"Well?"

He paid no attention at first, but after a while condescended to look at me. He snarled like a dog when he answered:

"Get away! get away! He's threatened murder! I'll have vengeance for this! Get away, I tell you!"

I wasn't much impressed by him, ugly as he looked. I thought of what John Cross had said about snakes, and was inclined to agree with that sallow-faced crank. But I wanted to be practical and wise, and so I told the man he'd better go home and be washed and get himself into shape again. He only glared at me and almost screamed out:

"You've run against the government of the United States, and you'll suffer for it! And that man threatened murder! Oh, I'll get even!"

I was going to answer him when I heard a soft footstep beside me, and turned my head and there was John Cross. He had come running down the road, but all that I have told had happened so quickly that he couldn't reach us in time to take any part in it. He didn't notice me at all. He only began walking around us, as I have seen a dog walk around some other dog upon which it was about to leap.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### AMONG THE HONEYSUCKLES.

It was Hakon Jaegenhortals  
    Stood amidst the fray.  
Usher at Valhalla's portals  
    Hakon was that day.  
Joyed he in his bowstring's twang  
    (Baresark he, at times);  
As each arrow sped he sang,  
    Shouted rugged rhymes;  
Loudly cried he to the arrow;  
"Pierce the bone and taste the marrow!"  
Drew each shaft back to its head  
    Till its either fang  
Lay mid-bow; and as it sped,  
    Fiercely Hakon sang;  
    "O, my arrow,  
    Seek the marrow!"

—*Saga of the Fjord Fight.*

Gaherty looked at John Cross contemptuously but I did not feel that way. The gaunt, pallid creature circled about us saying nothing and looking only at Gaherty until I put my hand upon his arm and asked him what silliness he was up to now?

He made no answer but tried at first to get away from me. Gaherty stood looking on but paying little attention further than to ask what the —— fool was trying to do? Gaherty was a little too much interested in his own affairs, just then, to think particularly of the actions of a creature he'd always seemed to consider half crazy and, after a last scowl at me, he went off toward Vincent's house, wiping his bloody face with his handkerchief as he went along.

John Cross became calm enough as soon as Gaherty was out of sight and asked me what I was hanging on to his arm so for? I told him that I was doing it just to be sure that he'd behave himself and he declared that he was all right. "I just wanted to have another good look at the fellow," said he, "and that was why I walked around him so. Worse than the water snakes, isn't he, Jason?"

I didn't answer his question but told him, pretty roughly, that I wanted to know how that calf got out of Vincent's barn?

"S'pose some one must have left a door open," he answered.

"Well then, how did it get out of the barnyard?"

"S'pose some one must have left the gate open."

"Did you do it?"

"What would I do it for? How'd I know where the calf was, anyway?"

"I told you where the calf was when I met you early in the day. And how came you in the road; and how came Lucinda Briggs behind the calf?"

John Cross grinned and his gaunt face took on a look of great slyness as he explained: "You see it was this way: I was coming down the north and south road, when I see the calf at the crossing and frisking about and kind o' working its way east. 'It's our calf as much as anybody's again,' I said and I hollered to Lucinda Briggs, who was out-doors up by your house and she and Alice both came down. Then Lucinda got up west of the calf and drove it along and I stayed at the crossing for awhile and then ran down. You saw all that happened."

He looked so simple while he was telling this that I almost believed him for a moment. I knew he was lying, though. That calf had been in Vincent's stable and the stable door and barnyard door had to be opened to let it out. They were both shut now—I could see that from where we were—and I knew that John Cross had done the job. I didn't say anything. What was the use?



I went to the house and found, from what Alice and Lucinda Briggs said, that it was just as I had supposed. They first heard John Cross shouting and saw the calf. Then Lucinda rushed out as a matter of course and Alice acted without thinking. She was very sober over it. I could see that she feared for David. As for him, he had nothing to say until we were alone. "We must look out now," was all he had to offer, even then.

As for me, I thought it very singular if lightning didn't strike at once pretty hard. I expected that David would be arrested promptly. It was true that where he had grappled Gaherty was on the Canadian side of the road, and it was probable enough that neither Gaherty nor Vincent had any proof as to who let out the calf, but I thought that in Gaherty's fearful rage he would do almost anything, off-hand. He was foxier than I thought, though.

A few days more passed and nothing happened. The calf was not interfered with in its field on the Canadian side and Lucinda Briggs, as you may wager, was mighty careful to fasten the gate behind her when she went across to feed it. We were working over in the east field most of the time now, or in the field, just opposite, on the

Canadian side, there being potatoes in one and a crop of clover which needed curing in the other. Jennison was rambling about the country with his gun, as usual, looking for a woodcock, for they were in season now though it was early for other game, and often stopping to chat with us, but of Gaherty we saw little. I had noticed him once or twice in the road between us and the crossing, but he had disappeared mysteriously almost as soon as I caught sight of him. The thing puzzled me and I resolved to keep a look-out. I knew, of course, that he was in hiding and watching us but just where he went to floored me. There appeared to be no place along the road where a man could get out of view.

Not far from the creek on our side of the road the bushes had grown up pretty thickly beside the board fence. There were blackberry and elderberry bushes and a mass of wild honeysuckles. The honeysuckles were in bloom now and made a pretty picture and the smell of them was a pleasant thing as one passed by. All this shrubbery was thickest, not in the hollow close to the creek, but on the rise where the road become level again with the general lay of the land. Just along here one day, I saw Gaherty walking and then, as usual,

lost sight of him suddenly. That set me thinking and when we came home to supper I didn't walk across the field with David but came up along the road and was joined on my way by John Cross who had been among the potato hills putting on green to keep off the bugs. When we got to where the bushes were I stopped and began to examine things and John Cross looked on curiously.

It didn't take me long to find what I was looking for. A man needs a bigger nest than a robin does. There was Gaherty's hiding-place and spying-place, and it was a good one! At one spot, all about one of the oak fence-posts, the bushes were particularly thick on the inside and they had grown until they reached through between the boards and hanging over the fence had made a little arbor in front of the post, on the road-side, big enough for a man to sit in and be almost hid from view. He could sit there in a bower of honeysuckles and one could pass close by without noticing him. At the foot of the fence-post lay a big stone with a flat top which had been brought there to serve for a seat. It was all clear enough; this was Gaherty's watch-house; from it, peering through the bushes in front and at the sides or the fence behind, he had a view of the fields all about

and of the road in either direction. We couldn't get across the line anywhere without being seen by him when he was in this hiding place.

There were charred matches on the ground and every indication that the man spent a good deal of his time there. I laughed when I saw it all. "Here's his hole!"

John Cross was all eagerness: "What do you mean?" he said.

"Why, I mean that here is where Gaherty hides when he is watching us. Can't you see the signs? There's where he sits and there's a hair from his ugly head showing just where it comes against the post as he sits here."

I've been out with a dog sometimes after a woodchuck, or some other wild thing, and have seen what we were hunting glide away when the dog was exploring some brush heap at a distance. Then I have called the dog to me and put him on the warm trail. How his eyes would gleam and the hairs on his back stiffen as he threw his nose to the ground and went on after! John Cross, when I showed him where Gaherty watched, made me think of a dog again. He had only to growl to make the thing complete. The skin drawn tight as it was over the bones of his face, twitched and

worked, his lips drew apart, showing his teeth, and his breath came fast. He looked at this place with a kind of fascination. It was quite a time before he spoke:

"And there's where he sits and there's where his head comes against the post, just where that hair is?"

"Of course. Can't you see?"

He walked all about and looked at the place and got over the fence and examined it from the other side, then clambered back again and came and stood beside me.

"Do you s'pose he watches here nights?"

"Of course he does. That's the time he expects us to try to do something against the law. He never comes out from Vincent's before ten or eleven o'clock in the forenoon and that must mean that he's up late. The fellow keeps a good lookout. I'll say that for him."

John Cross laughed until I told him that I didn't see anything so very funny about it. It was droll, and a good thing, of course, that we knew where Gaherty's watching-place was, but I didn't see any reason for going wild over it. We were in a bad way at the best, I said; the man was determined to make us come to grief anyhow; he had

the government back of him, and we'd get the worst of it in the end. But at all I said John Cross only laughed the more and, vexed with him, I started home, he following along by my side and finally showing a little more sense. That is, he stopped laughing, though he didn't say anything. I noticed that, when we separated, he walked in a more jaunty way than I had seen him do for months. "John Cross is getting better," I said to myself. I didn't know what I was talking about!

The next day passed without anything happening, and, though I kept my eye on the road at times, I didn't see anything of Gaherty. Across the way John Cross was still working among the potatoes and all went on peaceably. I felt well as I started along the road down to the field the next morning.

Have you ever strolled down a country road early in the morning in June or July? If you haven't, you have missed something of what is good in this world. You step higher, somehow, as you leave the door-step, and there come to your senses all the glisten and glory of the hour. The dew is upon the leaves and flowers yet and flashes from all the glorious coloring, and the fragrance of the flowers fills the air more than at any other

time in the day. Off over the fields the grass looks like a sea of silver, and if there are dark spots anywhere it is where the cows have lain over night, and you can see steam coming up there. Often, when a boy, sent early for the cows, after starting them up I've stood on those spots warming my bare feet. And from almost every shrub and tree, even as late as July, comes such a burst of music as does one's heart good. The meadow-lark sometimes rises from the stubble of grass with the same wonderful call he had in early spring, and the bobolink sings until his young are born, and the orioles which come north to us in such numbers are piping wherever trees are. As for the robin and thrush and the song-sparrow—why speak of them? We know them!

There is something about the summer morning aside from all this, too—I suppose it is in the air, in the pureness and strongness of it, which has come in a way we do not understand from the passing of the night. You feel you are a great man as you step out, if you be early enough.

I went down the road toward the east field, rejoicing in all the splendor of nature, and thought of nothing in particular until I came to where the honeysuckles and Gaherty's hiding-place were. As



I came up to that place, inhaling the odor of the flowers, I thought to myself how foolish we were in allowing this little difference with custom-house officers to trouble us so much, and how it would soon be all over, somehow, and but a thing to laugh at. So hopeful and strong are men of a summer morning! And then, just as I got opposite it, I looked at the little bower.

There was Gaherty, sitting on the stone, his head leaned back against the post and his eyes fixed on me as placidly as you please! I jumped back a little as I saw him, then I got half mad, as a man does when he has been startled, and walked right up to him.

"You're out early," I said.

He didn't answer; he looked at me steadily but he never moved. The arrogance and airs of the man made me mad now, clear through. I didn't much care what I said to him. "You're a sneak!" I roared out; "a sneak, hiding there in the bushes to watch better people than yourself! Why don't you speak up like a man?"

He did not reply, but still looked at me in that easy, indolent way. I walked close up to him with my blood boiling, but he didn't move. There came an awful feeling over me. The eyes of the



man sitting there never turned; they only stared at me steadily. There was not a wink of the eyelids, and as I stood, half dazed, I noticed in a dreamy way that upon one of his hands, which lay in his lap, drops of dew had gathered. That hand could not have been moved for hours! I trembled as the reason of the thing forced itself upon me. The man was dead!

I staggered back into the middle of the road. I looked again at the arbor opening to be sure I was in my right mind. There sat Gaherty still, his eyes seeming to follow me, somehow, but without any movement of them!

I don't know how it is or why it is; I don't know that I have ever heard or read anything about it, but it is queer, that feeling which comes to a man just after a sudden, fearful shock. A numbness both of body and mind. The senses, blinded, are stilled and groping somehow. At least it was that way with me. I raised my head and looked about me. There were the fields bright with the morning sun, there was the blue sky and there were the birds, singing and joyous. All of it was real. And there, close by me, was something else, the empty shell of what had held a soul.

I summoned all the manhood there was in me.

I walked over to where the staring dead man sat and grasped his shoulders. He did not yield to my touch. And then, looking closely, I saw that he was held to the post—held there by something which, driven through it, had pierced bone and marrow in his neck, and kept him thus, impaled!

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### POST MORTEM.

What is the weight of a dead man's soul?

Mathematician, tell me that!

Is it as 'twas with a being's whole:

Did it lose with the loss of a habitat?

How would it bear on the testing scale?

What in the problem is there to vex?

Symbols may serve you which seldom fail:

Tell us the equal of this odd "x"!

What is the weight of a dead man's soul?

What is the form of a dead man's soul?

East Indian dreamer tell me that!

Has it the shape of a parchment scroll,

Is it cubic or oval or round or flat?

Does it float about like a wisp of cloud,

Something drifting athwart the sky,

Or is it an entity, heavy-browed,

To those who may see it, who have the Eye?

What is the form of a dead man's soul?

What is the way of a dead man's soul?

Theologian, tell me that!

You, with the unctuous sentence roll,

You with the platitude that's pat?

Where does it drift? Is its orbit guessed?

Is it's course made plain to your tutored view?

Bah! The mere babe at its mother's breast  
Can tell as much of its flight as you!  
What is the way of a dead man's soul?

—*The Seeker.*

I cannot tell of the great horror that came upon me. My legs were weak and I staggered back and leaned against the fence at a place where there were no bushes. I went into the middle of the road and stood with my back toward the thing in the honeysuckle arbor. I tried to think of what was best to be done, and there came upon me a sense that I must act quickly—though I don't know why that should be—and started wildly down the road on a run and never stopped until I reached the house. I saw David on the stoop and called out to him, before I got near, that Gaherty had been killed, and I called out the same thing to Vincent, who was going to his barn on the other side of the north and south road. I did not think of the difference between men, nor of their relations, so full was I of the dreadful thing I had seen. I yelled aloud trying to reach John Cross in his house, but no answer came and I concluded he must have gone to work. Then, I suppose because I had got rid of some of the nervousness in me, I became gradually calm

and was a sensible man, within such limits as my understanding would allow. I went to the house to talk with David.

I found him puzzled over what little he had heard of what I had tried to shout to him, and when he had listened to me and knew what it all was he was nearly as much affected as I. Old man Mackenzie came out and listened to what was said and, as we both started running back down the road, he followed us as fast as he could while Vincent came from his place, running, too. In almost no time we stood, all four of us together, about the dead man. We took hold of him, finally, and pulled him away with a great wrench from where he was sitting and then something awful was revealed!

Murder had been done and in such a way as never murder was done before. Through the oaken post, at just the height where the lower part of the man's head would come as he leaned back against the wood, a three-quarter inch auger-hole had been bored and from it projected now for two or three inches a short, four-cornered spike of iron, all bright and glittering save close to the post where the blood had oozed out and made a dark crust about it. It was easy enough to see how

the dreadful deed had been done. The hole had been bored and the spike thrust into it from behind just so far that the point would not quite project. In the darkness the hole would not be noticed and Gaherty had sat leaning almost against the point. Then a swift, fierce blow from the other side had driven the spike into him with such sudden force that it did not even move his head, but had sent the thing right through the spinal cord, killing him instantly and leaving him fastened horribly to the post, staring as I had found him.

I've read that somewhere—in Spain, I think it is—when a man is to be executed, his head is fixed in some kind of vise and held so that a spike fixed in machinery just touches him where the neck and base of the brain join. A single turn of the handle drives the spike ahead and in the fraction of a second the man is dead, the current of life being cut. So, though in a ruder way, had Gaherty been killed. He never knew what hurt him! He was a live, watchful man one instant, the next the staring thing I had found sitting under the honeysuckles.

We laid the body decently on the grass by the road-side and David asked Vincent if it should be

taken to his house. Vincent nodded but said nothing and I went for the horses and wagon. A few minutes later what was mortal of Gaherty lay upon a settee in Vincent's best room and we came out together in front of the house. Vincent had all this time spoken never a word. He stood looking at us stupidly and there came steadily upon his face a look of fear, or hatred, or something I can't just describe, and he shook his fist at David and fairly yelled:

"You murderer! You said you'd kill him! He told me of your threats—and you've done it!"

He started on a run toward his barn and five minutes later came out into the roadway with his horses hitched to a buckboard and drove off furiously toward Magone. I knew what that meant and turned to David:

"He's going to accuse you of the murder," I said, "you'll be arrested before night if you stay here "

"I shall not go away from here," he answered. "Why should I? It's nonsense to charge me with killing Gaherty, much as I disliked him. You know that. The whole thing is absurd!"

"But you threatened him, and Vincent knows it. There'll be trouble."

There seemed slowly to dawn upon David some idea of the strange position in which he was placed. A man whom he had threatened, and one whose very existence was a burden and a menace to him, had been found murdered. No one else seemed to have such interest in putting Gaherty out of the way—since there was no doubt the officials at headquarters had been led to believe we were professional smugglers. The showing was all against him. He bowed his head and thought for a moment.

“It looks pretty bad, Jason,” he said. “I’ll go to the house.”

I walked with him as far as our own gate, and he went in while I kept on. I could think of only one thing. I got an axe and went back to where I had found Gaherty, though I hated to go near the place. I tapped the point of the spike with the flat of the axe, and the iron went back easily enough, and I reached my hand through the fence and drew it out. It fitted the auger-hole to a nicety, without being tight. I examined the iron closely, and it puzzled me. It was rusted from its thick end about half way down, but from there it was bright and clean, and the point of it was almost as sharp as a needle. I put it in my coat



pocket, and was about going back to the house, when, looking toward the potato field, I saw John Cross hard at work. The weeds had rather got the start of us there, and something remained to be done with the hoe after the cultivator had gone through. It seemed to me singular that John Cross should be working there so unconcernedly, and then I remembered he had not answered when I called in front of his house, and that he might not have noticed us with the wagon, and so didn't know anything about the fearful discovery of the morning. I climbed the fence and went over to him and told him all that had happened.

He did not even look up as I spoke, but kept chopping away at the weeds. I didn't know what to make of it, but a fearful suspicion, which had been growing in my mind, deepened as I noted his strange way. I must have the truth out of him!

"John," I said, "who killed Gaherty?"

He looked up then, and actually laughed!

"How should I know?" he answered. "I'm glad the fellow's gone, though. Good thing, isn't it? He was a snake!" And the man's eyes gleamed and he looked as merry as if I'd just told him some joke.

What could I do? I left him working there and

went to the house and sat down in a chair on the porch, and tried to figure it out. I knew in my heart at whose hands the murdered man had come to his death, but I couldn't prove it yet. I pulled out the heavy iron spike and looked at it again, and then the wonder came upon me that I hadn't seen what it was at first. It was a drag-tooth!

I sprang off the porch and was over in a shed back of the barn on the Canadian place in no time. In that shed had lain since spring a harrow of the pattern we used to call "Butterfly," two wings made of frames mortised together and hinged at the center. A tooth from the harrow was missing. I tried the one I had in my pocket, and it fitted the vacant place. All the other teeth were rusted, though, and this, as I have said, was bright and brought to a fine point. That suggested something else to me.

There was a grindstone in the barn which worked with a treadle. I went in and examined it. All around the grinding surface of the stone was a red streak, and there was a narrow gutter where the point of something had been borne down to get it finer still. I knew now the story of the killing of Gaherty as well, almost, as if I had seen the awful

crime committed. I knew who had bored that hole in the post and thrust in the sharpened harrow-tooth, and had then lain hidden in the field until the watcher had come at night and taken his accustomed seat. I could imagine the man in the field stealing up toward the post so softly that the one on the other side would not hear even the crackling of a twig, and then dealing that sudden, deadly blow, probably with the flat of an axe, upon the butt of the sharpened iron, and sending it into bone and brain. It was clear to me, and as clear, too, now, that the murder had been done by a madman.

It was nearly noon. I started to the house to tell David what I had discovered, and to see what we should do about having John Cross arrested, but before I got there Vincent drove up to the gate. his horses all a-lather, and with him were two other men in a double buggy. I knew them both. One was the sheriff of the county and the other was a deputy. They went in just ahead of me. "There's the murderer! Arrest him!" I heard Vincent call out as I mounted the steps, and when I came into the sitting-room David was a prisoner. The women were in the wing, where David had probably asked them to stay, but I could hear a

sobbing. Old man Mackenzie was stamping about the room indignant and ugly at what he called the outrage, while David was the coolest of the lot.

The sheriff was a personal friend, and David, simply saying that he knew nothing about the murder, added that he was ready to go. The officer explained that he was sorry, but that there was only one thing for him to do, since the charge had been made, and added that they had better start at once. Then I broke in:

"You've got the wrong man! I can tell you who the murderer is!"

"Who is he?" said the sheriff.

"His name is John Cross, and he's crazy. He's working over there in the potato-field now," and then I told of all I had learned.

Vincent roared out that it was all a lie; that I was trying to shield David. "It's only one of their tricks," he shouted, but the sheriff thought differently.

"We'll take John Cross along," he said "Come over to the potato-field with me."

The sheriff and I started for the potato-field, leaving Vincent and the deputy with David. I showed where the murder had been done, and then we turned to get the murderer. The field was

vacant. There lay the hoe, just where John Cross was using it when I talked with him, but the man was gone. We went to his house. He had not been seen by any of the family since breakfast-time. We hunted keenly then, in the house and in every barn and every shed on either farm. We explored every hiding-place to be thought of, but without result. John Cross had disappeared!

We went to the house again and told of what had happened.

"What did I tell you!" shouted Vincent; "it's all a trick! They've spirited the man away, and are going to put the blame on him. It won't do!"

The sheriff himself was annoyed by the man's display of venom and told him sharply that he didn't want any more of it. David went into the wing for a few moments, and then came out ready to go with the officers. He called me aside:

"Alice is going to stay with me at Magone to-night. The sheriff has agreed to it. You'd better follow us, bringing her in the light buggy, and then drive back to-night to take charge of things. I shall be brought back myself, of course, to-morrow, for there'll be the inquest."

They started, David and the two men, for the buggy, and there came into my head, in a dismal

way, part of a verse of poetry I'd seen somewhere:

“Two stern-faced men set out from Lynn,  
Through cold and heavy mist,  
And Eugene Aram walked between  
With gyves upon his wrists.”

Of course I knew that there would be no real danger, that David would be cleared, but the words kept ringing in my ears as I went to the barn after the team and I thought of handcuffs every time I clicked a buckle in the harnessing.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### TRUTH FROM A LUNATIC.

And if ever my shackles I rend again  
And leap in the open air,  
I'll show these shallow ones what is brain!  
I'll make some troublesome matters plain,  
And who is raving and who is sane,  
And who can do and dare!  
I'm bound and guarded! I cannot rise.  
I'm a maniac they say,  
But *they* are the madmen. 'Tis I am wise  
And ready for glorious enterprise:  
They shall see it with even *their* sodden eyes,  
If ever I break away!

—*In His Study.*

The buggy carrying the officers with David was hardly out of sight before I had our own horses with the light buggy before the house, and then went in for Alice. I expected to find her crying and broken down, but I was mistaken. She was calm and quiet, though I could see a little dampness about her eyes. She was telling Lucinda Briggs what to do regarding certain household matters. Both old man Mackenzie and Mrs. Long

were more excited than Alice, and the good girl, troubled as she must have been at heart, actually tried to soothe them. She told them that David had said it would be all right, and that David would not say it unless it were so, even to relieve them. Then she went into the other room and kissed the babies and we started for Magone. I had dreaded that trip with her, but, instead of being a trial, it was a relief to me. She was so brave and sensible and made herself so practical, too, since the being she loved most in the world was in trouble. She knew with me, as soon as I had told all the circumstances, how the murder had been done and by whom, and we agreed together that the only thing to do was to find John Cross. I knew the sheriff would send officers on the same errand as soon as he reached Magone, and I resolved to make a big effort that way myself.

We drove right to the jail when we reached Magone. The sheriff lived over the jail, and David was still up-stairs with him when we got there. It was worth while to see the look on David's face as Alice came in. It was finally arranged that David and "the other prisoner," as the sheriff jokingly called Alice, should occupy a big room together, inside the jail proper, but hardly to be



called a cell, and then we bade them good night. I had a talk with the sheriff later, and he arranged to send two good men back with me to help in the hunt for John Cross. It was clear enough to me that the officer placed no faith in Vincent's charge that John Cross was not the real murderer but had been spirited away to serve as a scapegoat.

I saw a lawyer, too—David had asked me to attend to that—and when old ex-Judge Mason, the best one in town, had heard all the story, he only laughed over all that related to David. But the part about John Cross interested him. "I've always said that fried pork and pie were undermining the foundation of the republic," he said, "but I don't believe I ever had so good an illustration of it. However, though David Long is all right, or will be, we must find Cross. He'll show himself."

I told him that I didn't know about that; the man had all his senses, and was only morbid in a ghastly way and crazy on one theme. He had evidently become scared, and might have fled anywhere into Canada.

"Maybe so," said the old judge, "but I don't think we are going to have much trouble."

I went back with the two deputy sheriffs, and

when I got there found Jennison with old man Mackenzie. I was mighty glad of that. Jennison hadn't heard of the murder until late in the day, and had come over at once. His presence was a comfort to me. He had been there all along, he knew all about us, and he was a government officer, whose testimony would be listened to with, maybe, more respect on that account. He quite agreed with me as to the nature of the crime which had taken place, and joined promptly with the rest of us in the hunt to be made for the murderer.

I felt convinced that if John Cross had not fled absolutely from the region, he would be lurking about the farms, and might even go to his own house. We arranged that the two deputies should guard that place, hiding between the house and the barn, while Jennison and I should look about the two farms. I took our own farm and Jennison the Mackenzie place. We felt that if either of us came upon John Cross we could handle him, though a crazy man or a desperate one seems sometimes strong beyond his muscles. And so, as soon as it was fully dark, we started out.

I kept about the barn and sheds until nearly 11 o'clock. It was not a very clear night, but I had a tolerably good view of the road and of the fields,

and I made up my mind that no man could pass along the one or cross the other unless I saw him. I walked through the fields once or twice, but saw nothing living save the cattle lying down, chewing their cud, and a fox which sneaked by me, maybe with a thought as to the foolishness of trying to get a chicken on that particular night. It was nearly one o'clock when I determined to make a final round.

I did not go across the fields this time, but went down the road toward the spot where I had made such an awful discovery the morning before. I haven't much superstition about me, but as I came near the honeysuckle bushes I'm afraid I felt a little creepy. I could fancy that dead face staring at me again from amid the flowers, and I didn't like it. I got close to the place and then stopped for a moment to try and figure out where John Cross could have hidden before he crept up on the other man. And then I saw something which almost made my heart stop beating.

There was a deep drain furrow ran across the field just there, and along its sides grew a lot of weeds. I saw something dark rise out of this furrow. It straightened up gradually, and as it did so I could tell that it was the figure of a man.

It was not light enough to distinguish forms or features, but I could see his movements pretty well. The figure rose out of the shallow ditch, and, bending low, began creeping along toward the post where had been Gaherty's hiding-place. So softly did it step that, listening keenly as I was, I could not hear the slightest sound. Nearer and nearer it came to the post, until it was close beside it. Then, so slowly that I could see no movement, though it rose gradually higher and higher, the figure raised itself until it stood erect. I was too amazed to do anything, even had I been so inclined. There was a sudden raising aloft of the arms, something swung through the air, and "crack" against the wood of the post came something heavy. Then the figure jumped back, careful no longer, there was a laugh, and the man, whoever he was, started running across the field.

I was myself in a moment then, over the fence and after him and, shouting, "Stop, John Cross! It's I! It's Jason!" but I might as well have shouted to the winds. The figure but ran the faster. It gained on me at every stride or leap—I don't know which to say, so wonderfully it ran in a way I could only guess at in the half-darkness—and was over the fence and into the wood, while I

was two hundred yards behind. I knew there was no use seeking it further. I went back and found the two deputy sheriffs and hallooed for Jennison and got him with us, and together, as the daylight was breaking, we explored the wood. We could find no one there.

We all returned to the house and awaited 10 o'clock, the time when the inquest was to be held at Vincent's house. Long before that time teams began to come in from all directions and hitch up along the north and south road. From Magone the news had gone swiftly over the county, as such news will, and the farmers, three-fourths of whom had known David and liked him, and to many of whom had come some inkling of our troubles, were coming in to see the end of the thing. A number of them obtained entrance to the house somehow, and were looking at the dead man on the settee. I wonder how it is that so many people like to look at what is but the old hulk of an abandoned saw-mill, or grist-mill, or any mill you choose, for that is all there is to the useless mass which is left after the soul is gone. Those who were not looking at what was temporary of Gaherty were outside in the road telling stories and trying, indifferently, to trade horses.

Just before 10 o'clock there was a dust down the road toward Magone, and there came up to the door three buggies. One held the county coroner. There was no one with him, for his jurors had been summoned, and were all in the house, very important, before he came. When I say important, I do not mean that they were not sensible, for they were mostly good, sturdy farmers, with hard heads, but they knew that they were jurors. After them came the sheriff and two more deputies. And behind all, unguarded, came David and Alice in a light buggy hired from a livery-stable. That showed what the sheriff thought of the charge against David.

I needn't tell much about the inquest. I don't know how to describe such a thing, anyhow. David was brought into the sitting-room and Alice took a seat beside him, and then there was a wait. Then, finally, came in all the jurors and sat down in a row of chairs which had been placed for them. Then the coroner came in, while the sheriff stood off at one side, and the examination of witnesses began. Vincent was the first one called. As I heard what he said the blood boiled within me.

Vincent told the story of what he said were our attempts at regular smuggling, lugging it in, some-

how, in spite of Judge Mason, and told, then, of David's threat to Gaherty, of the murder, and of all that had happened, closing with the disappearance of John Cross. Even as I listened, I saw how helpless we were, upon the face of things. He told of what I had said of John Cross, and of how, when we looked for him, John Cross could not be found.

It was a very bad case against us when Vincent left his chair. He had not sworn to any absolute untruth, yet it was all one way. Even David, cool as he seemed to be at first, was red of face now, and very thoughtful. There was no other witness but Vincent on that side. Then Judge Mason called me.

We had done what we had never done on the farm before that morning—we had neglected the cows. Not one of the seven cows we were milking then had been touched, and they had all come up into the road before the gate, where we milked them usually, and stood there with full udders. I was looking at them through the window of Vincent's sitting-room, hardly knowing that I saw them at all, when there grew upon my sight, strangely, a familiar picture. John Cross had been helping us with the milking on crowded mornings



and as I looked out there was the same scene all over again, except that David and I were lacking. There were the cows, and there, sitting beside old Flora, the boss cow, was John Cross, milking away as quietly as if there were no trouble in this world, which is so bleak in winter and so pleasant in summer, just as it is with events in the lives of the people who walk upon two legs and live upon it, and think they own it.

The coroner's deputy was calling for me, but I did not mind that—I didn't care much for anything. I ran out and down the road and up the other road to where John Cross was milking old Flora. I caught him by the shoulder:

"What are you doing here!"

"Milking Flora, Jason; can't you see?"

"But what are you doing? David is being tried. It's only a coroner's jury, but he is being tried in a way—up at Vincent's house, for killing Gaherty. You killed him! You know you did! What are you doing here?"

John Cross looked up at me almost wonderingly.

"They mustn't bother David," he said. Then he stopped milking and threw his stool over beside the fence and carried the milk in where Lucinda Briggs could get it, and then came back to me:



"Let's go up to the—what do you call it?—the inquest."

They were waiting for me and wondering why I had gone out in such a hurry. I went over and talked with Judge Mason a minute, and then John Cross was put on the stand. He went up and took his seat in the chair smilingly, if you can call "smilingly" a look which comes only from lips pleasantly enough open and making lines across yellow cheeks drawn hardly over out-sticking bones.

The first question asked by Judge Mason was: "Do you know who killed Mr. Gaherty?"

John Cross laughed: "Course I do. I killed him myself. Easiest thing in the world!"

Judge Mason started in his seat, then controlled himself and became wise. "How did you do it?" he asked.

"He came down nights to watch, and leaned against the post. I bored a hole through it and put in a drag-tooth, and then I watched and plugged him! He didn't even squeak! I'm a snake-killer, I am!"

"But you were there again last night. What were you there for?"

"Well, I kind o' forgot. I thought he was there again; but he wasn't."

"Don't you know it's wrong to kill another man?"

John Cross laughed: "I dunno. Pshaw! I kill snakes!"

There were other questions, by the coroner and by a lawyer Vincent had got, but John Cross did not change. How could he? He was an unnatural creature, spoiled, made a maniac, by his way of living and his nervousness, but just now more natural for it all. He was asked what he'd hit the harrow-tooth with. He said he'd used nothing but a broad-axe, and that when he'd run away from me the night before he'd thrown it in the ditch. "Old Jason runs pretty well," he said; "I didn't think there was that speed in him," and he laughed and grinned at me.

I needn't tell of the rest of the examination. All came out clearly enough. There wasn't any chance for any doubt. We even sent a man down the field and found the broad-axe in the ditch.

There were no more witnesses. Why should there be? John Cross had told simply upon the stand the story of how he had killed Gaherty and seemed very proud of it. It was awful, though he laughed as he repeated it, with all particularity, and I need not tell it here. And the man was taken

to the town, and, finally, was sent to an insane asylum, and that is all that relates to him. Of course the jury brought in a verdict properly, and David was discharged.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### AN OLD MAN'S REFLECTIONS.

The centuries bring the lessons,  
But men are slow to learn.  
The moral taught with every age,  
The story writ on every page,  
Make humankind but sadly sage.  
The wheels of progress turn  
With but a sluggish motion—  
Too many a man is dumb.  
But good on bad encroaches still,  
There's more of right and less of ill,  
Faint beacons glimmer on the hill;  
The time of light will come!

—*The Horizon.*

A lot of things happened after the coroner's jury had cleared David and had declared John Cross to be the man who murdered Gaherty, but to us they were not of much importance—I mean anything which happened immediately. One incident, though, was amusing, and to Lucinda Briggs in particular, the cause of unbounded happiness. David was pretty well known throughout the county, and was popular. The story of Vincent's

rancor had got about—indeed, it showed sufficiently at the inquest—and after it was all over, a big, strapping young farmer got into a dispute with the man. It was only over some trifling matter, such as the hitching of the farmer's horse to a shade tree, but I think he rather aggravated Vincent purposely to get up an excuse for grappling him. He threatened to throw Vincent into a rather deep barn-yard puddle, and when some harsh answer was snarled back, he kept his word. He was a young giant in build, and he caught Vincent up and fairly pitched him into the dirty mess. It was a pitiful object which crawled out of the puddle, but no one resented the treatment of him or offered him any sympathy. There were only comments that it served him right, that he had been a bad neighbor, and that maybe it would teach him a lesson. I don't think he profited by it much; his disposition was too evil for that, but it disgusted him with the people of the region, and he sold his farm cheap and left the region within a week. And if you saw Lucinda Briggs chuckling to herself any time within a year after that you may be sure she was thinking of what took place on that day of the inquest.

It seemed to me, as I said in the beginning, that

all that had happened to us on the farm would be of interest if only told in the right way, but I know I have failed in that. The gift doesn't come to everybody, and I know it hasn't come to me. I don't think I should have tried to tell of it all, but for the man whom I needn't name here, who has been spending the later summer with us and, who, when I chanced to tell him of what had happened, made me promise to try to write it out in my own way. He's the best shot at a wood-cock I ever saw, particularly at snap-shots as the birds pitch over the willow-bushes. In the evening he looks at what I have written and, he has divided it all up into chapters and put some verses at the top of each—though I don't know what he does that for; it seems almost finicky—but he won't change anything I have written. He says that must stand by itself, and so it has to go, though, to tell the truth, I feel a little shaky. I don't know how I shall feel when I see it in a book, and realize that it is something written by me—only a rugged old hired man on a farm.

The newspapers, even the big ones in the big cities, had columns about the murder of the custom-house officer, and how David was arrested for the crime, and how it came out that not he, but a

lunatic, was the guilty man. And in connection with the story as it was printed, came out all the real facts about what was really a persecution, and from what they thus saw the officials at headquarters seemed to realize that mistakes had been made about us, and David got some very kindly letters from them. Jennison probably had something to do with this, so far as the Canadian authorities were concerned, for this side-whiskered, short-coated, sturdy man had got excited himself during the trial, and swore he'd leave a service which often worked wrong, because, in his opinion, it wasn't founded on common sense. We'd become, suddenly, people of some importance. There was no more misunderstanding as to our intentions, and soon no more attention was paid to us than to other farmers along the border. That was quite enough, though.

We were still people without a country, as David said, because we had two countries, and though Vincent was a long way off and Gaherty a far greater distance, we felt that new complications might arise at any time, and new troubles come upon us. So it was that when an offer—not a very good one—was made for the Mackenzie farm, David consulted with his father-in-law and let the

property go. The old man was disposed to resist at first, and take the farm back himself, but he'd got accustomed to his new home, and he couldn't leave his grandchildren. The farm went, and with the money thus secured, David got the Vincent place, that had been bought only as a sort of speculation by a big farmer who lived two or three miles away, and who was ready to sell at a little advance. The Mackenzie mortgage was transferred, and there we were, with all our land in one country, and divided by a north and south road instead of by an east and west one. Even our Canadian girl, the mother of our children, was happier for it. But David and I have never been quite content; as farmers, we couldn't be.

There's no use talking though I don't generally admit it, the old Mackenzie farm is a better one than the Vincent place. It lies better and has better soil and is just fitted for some of the crops we need. There it lies and a hard-working man raises good crops on it and hauls them away to the north and gets less reward for his labor than we do for ours. It lies there aggravatingly, with only an imaginary line running somewhere along the road, but a line which is a great wall, along which great crimes have been committed. I grit my teeth



whenever I look at that splendid farm and think that we might have it still, and that the twins and their sister were really, after a fashion, robbed of a portion of their heritage. And the twins and their sister are a great deal to me. As for the young lady, I am her slave—so is everyone else, for that matter—but the boys are my especial care. I'm proud of them for they are going to the district school now and have got well beyond their letters, for they're five years old, and, besides, are the best built pair of cubs of their age in the county. I'll bet on that. There's a neat, even piece of turf out in the orchard where the three of us, the twins and I, go sometimes, and if you could look on you would see some very pretty wrestling. They're about evenly matched and the practice teaches them to keep their tempers. By and by I want David to allow them a couple of pair of small boxing gloves and what follows will be better for them still. That will give them self-reliance and self-control, I think, beyond any other form of exercise. I know some people object to it but I want to make a couple of gentlemen of my boys.

It is midsummer now again and the days are just as bright as when poor John Cross, who is in an asylum still, used to glide about the fields nursing

dark thoughts of the ugly officer who found a pleasure in persecution. The honeysuckles still grow along the fence beyond the creek, and the oak post with that gruesome auger-hole in it still stands, and the boys of the neighborhood may be seen sometimes gathered about it, telling a new-comer of what once happened there. But there is no other reminder of the dark days when we were all growing old so fast. We are doing well, as things go in this world.

It is human nature, though, I suppose, to chafe at what is not and yet might be so easily, and I cannot help looking across to the north at the grass fields and the growing crops stretching away so pleasantly, and grumbling that the land is divided. Why should there have been such a story to tell at all? That is what bothers me. Why, somehow, as men get to be more and more knowing and reasonable, does it not come that they realize that the ways of nature are really the best and that what is unnatural does not profit one time in a thousand? Maybe it is only because I am an ignorant old man, one who knows little save what he has learned from the newspapers or seen with his own eyes, but I do believe things could be adjusted better. I do believe that at least brothers

in blood should work together. That would be a great improvement, on one continent anyhow. If that much could come, maybe it would be followed in the end by an even wider better feeling and there might be some prophecy in a wonderful poem I once read which told of a coming time when nations would not be mere fighting dogs, and when, as it put it prettily:

“The war drum throbbed no longer and the battle-flags were furled  
In the parliament of man, the federation of the world.”

THE END





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